

FRUITFUL FAITH IN
THE FRAGILE
YEARS

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ABSTRACT

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by

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This qualitative research offers fragile older adults in a large Presbyterian (USA) congregation a ministry model that integrates value, meaning, and significance into their spiritual faith journeys. Through pre and post surveys, interviews, and feedback response case studies, subjects recall and retell their faith stories being asked by the listener: “Did I hear what you wanted me to hear?” The model identifies the value of participants’ hearing their own faith stories and the power of intentional active listening and ministry of presence. Being listened to and heard enables fragile seniors to reclaim identity as valued, beloved, and mattering to God.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer thanks the mentors, colleagues, professional consultants, participants, final examination team and other individuals who have helped with the Ministry Project and Model. Special recognition is given to Director of Pastoral Services at Hershey Medical Center, the Rev. Paul Derrickson; Senior Minister of Highland Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Dr. Roger Rabey; Interim Minister and spouse of the researcher, the Rev. Ken Osborne; and denominational mentor for Senior Ministry, the Rev. Dr. Richard Morgan. Each has given ongoing support and encouragement in the development of the research model over the five years of the researcher's active engagement with the topic.

In particular, the researcher gives thanks to congregational members of Highland Presbyterian Church; Rebecca Wetzel, project editor; the Rev. Ralph E. Osborne and the Rev. Dr. Jack J. Carmichael for their support of this project.

The writer acknowledges the gifts and support received from the Highland Fund, the Board of Deacons, and the Session of Highland Presbyterian Church who made this study possible.

DEDICATION

This model for ministry is dedicated to the inspiration, inquisitiveness, vitality, and energy of the late Dorothy Heinzelman, a beloved friend and great Saint of God's Church, whose questions about her own meaning and significance and value in God's eyes when she could no longer 'do anything' for God because of her fragile condition, helped the researcher solidify the final research field study.

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ABBREVIATIONS

a.m.	ante meridiem
CE	Common Era
DMIN	Doctor of Ministry
DOI	digital object identifier
DVD	digital video disc
ed.	editor, edition, edited by
et al.	et alia, and others
etc.	et cetera
ibid.	ibidem, the same
KJV	King James Version
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NRSVNT	New Revised Standard Version of the New Testament
p.m.	post meridiem
PCUSA	Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
TM	The Message
TMNTCE	The Message: The New Testament in Contemporary English
TOBEENKJVNT	The Open Bible, Expanded Edition of the New King James Version of the New Testament
(U.S.A.)	United States of America
vol.	volume

INTRODUCTION

The Model in Ministry developed in this project is a response to the researcher's continuing observation that some long-time, faith-filled Christians have reported such severe symptoms of fragile aging that they experience significant levels of spiritual doubt. The researcher hypothesizes that because such individuals are so fragile they no longer value themselves as having meaning or significance since they are unable to 'do things' for or with other people.

Some individuals in fragile circumstances question whether all they have believed about the Triune God and Christian faith is true and reliable. The research arises from a ministry context of a multi-generational Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation of fifteen hundred members located in biblically conservative Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Over seven hundred and fifty of the members are aged sixty-five and older, with nearly two hundred and fifty individuals being home bound or experiencing significant health concerns or quality of life issues which prevent them from being active in the 'doingness' of living.

Combining quality of life and spiritual needs pre and post surveys with interview response case studies and follow-up feedback responses, the researcher assessed whether research participants' long-held personal life needs and spiritual values regarding meaning and significance contribute to their ability to transcend spiritual doubt and perceived crisis of faith in their spiritual journeys.

Outcomes of the research identify common themes and provide a collection of faith-based resources designed to encourage sharp-minded yet frail aging seniors to remain “fruitful and fulfilled” in the “being-ness” rather than “doing-ness” of the life context of Christian faith. An appendix of resources assists clergy, caregivers, and family members to respond to seniors’ faith-based concerns. Prayers, devotions, and service formats have been collected to assist older adults to fruitfully respond in faith to the Triune God.

Chapter One introduces the reader to the area of ministry to be addressed by the Ministry Model. It explains how the researcher came to be interested in the needs of frail and fragile older adults. It also describes the context and nature of the researcher’s call to ministry and the vision and goals of the current ministry being accomplished within the large multi-generational Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation located in Lancaster, PA.

Chapter Two describes the emerging concepts, ideas, ‘state of the art’ ministry, and spiritual support models for supporting older adults as they enter the third quarter of their life. This chapter identifies other research projects, which support the need for this particular Ministry Project and its findings.

Chapter Three provides the theoretical basis for this Ministry Project. It establishes the case for why the researcher believes this Model in Ministry is relevant and needed at this time in the life of the larger church. This chapter discusses how biblical, historical, and theological understandings support and undergird the Ministry Project.

Chapter Four details the methodology and design of the research model used in developing the Model in Ministry. It describes the nature and progress of the six-month field experience and the challenges and opportunities that the researcher encountered

during the process of the field-testing with frail and fragile older adults. A detailed description of the research method is also presented.

Chapter Five describes the experience of the researcher during the actual implementation of the project. How the data was collected and analyzed is described along with the findings and outcomes experienced through the field-testing and interview process.

Chapter Six gives the reader an understanding of the researcher's learning and reflections on the Ministry Project. A summary of the findings and recommendations for using the Model in Ministry are presented, along with pertinent conclusions. This chapter contains the evaluations and changes made to the field ministry model for future use. Recommendations for improvement to the Model in Ministry are made to enhance the model for use by others working with fragile aging individuals. The researcher offers her theological insights, recommendations for future research, and new ideas that have emerged because of the Ministry Project experience.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Chapter One introduces the reader to the needs of fragile, aging adults who are being served by the researcher's project Model in Ministry. This chapter explains how the researcher came to be interested in the needs of older adults. Additionally, the reader is introduced to the context and nature of the researcher's call to ministry. The project ministry context, the vision, and the goals of the current ministry that are being accomplished within the large multi-generational Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation located in Lancaster, PA are also presented.

Older adults are called by God to be energized, fruitful, and to live significant and meaningful lives. They are to thrive in community with other people sharing the truth and experiences of their lives. As disciples who live fruitfully, individuals may need to change certain aspects of their lives to live into God's best intentions. Seniors are to love and serve God by worshipping and glorifying God. To be fruitful, fragile seniors are invited to adopt the virtues and gifts of God's grace.

The purpose of this project is to assist individuals in recognizing the love and grace of living in relationship with God. Learning to live fruitful lives of "being" rather than "doing" is the goal so that seniors can be assured and confident of God's presence and activity in all experiences of their lives—even in the midst of doubt and uncertainty.

The findings suggest ways in which the research project participants experience meaning and significance in their lives, as well as in their faith journey with God. In addition, the project suggests practical ways to assist clergy, caregivers, and family members in responding to seniors who experience crisis of faith or doubt. The project outcomes offer a variety of resources to assist older adults to respond fruitfully in faith to the Triune God. Included in the project outcomes is a daylong conference to empower and enrich individuals living in the third stage of their lives, which may or may not include retirement, to grow in significance through being rather than doing. The planning process and the actual conference schedule as the resource outcomes for this field ministry project are found in Appendix D on pages 179-184.

Nature and Purpose of the Ministry Project

The purpose of this qualitative Ministry Project is to understand how the elderly and more fragile attendees of a large Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation integrate the limitations of aging and a more fragile quality of life with their faith experience and understanding of God's presence and relationship with them. The goal of the project is to identify new opportunities for older members to value themselves as having significance and meaning as God's beloved children so that they will experience a fruitfulness of faith, not necessarily based upon what they 'do' for God.

The researcher believes the project will suggest practical ways to assist these sharp-minded elders to: (1) remain fruitful and fulfilled as Christian disciples; (2) claim lives of significance and meaning; and (3) trust and remain confident in God's providence and care as they walk through many limitations of the aging process.

The ministry project research identifies new opportunities for older members to value themselves as having significance and meaning as God's beloved children. The findings from the field experience are offered as a means to enhance spiritual growth and offer appropriate recommendations for the types of resources, materials, and study aids, which may be developed to assist the fragile and aging to remain fruitful in faith and discipleship with the Triune God. The Model in Ministry may enhance and clarify the church's support and pastoral care for a growing population of "older" adults who can no longer practice their Christianity through "doing good things for others" but are still able to remain fruitful and flourishing in their faith and spiritual practices. "Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom."¹

Hauerwas and Yordy, in the essay entitled "Captured in Time: Friendship and Aging," observe that growing old involves the loss of relationship with acquaintances and friends, the loss of confirmation of life stories, and a declining self-identity. The gradual changes in one's outward appearance, recollection, and memory create a sense of alienation and isolation from one's self. "The stories that make up our lives, that constitute who we are, are in many ways too rich to be told. Our telling them can increase our loneliness because the telling is always less than the life lived or shared. In short, growing old cannot help but be a continuing alienation from who we once were."²

The Ministry Research Project is based upon the researcher's continuing observation that long-term faithful Christians, who are in their fragile and aging years, report they experience significant crises of faith. As the aging process becomes more

¹ Job 32:7 New International Version (NIV).

² Stanley Hauerwas and Lauren Yordy, "Captured in Time: Friendship and Aging," in *Growing Old in Christ*, eds. Stanley Hauerwas, Carole Bailey Stoneking, Keith G. Meador, and David Cloutier (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 170.

difficult, and individuals become more fragile, some faithful Christians begin to question, lose confidence, and experience faith crises about whether what they believe about faith and God's care can really be trusted and relied upon.

One outcome of the project is a series of responsive case studies offering emerging developmental resources for ministering to aging seniors. The resources describe ways aging seniors can continue their Christian discipleship growth (1) by nurturing them as fruitful, fulfilled Christian disciples; (2) helping them realize their significance and contributions; and (3) demonstrating they still can have trust and confidence in God's love and care as they walk through the limitations of the aging process.

Significance of the Ministry Area

The researcher's call to ministry is to help people discern God's grace, love, activity, and purpose in the midst of their life experiences. Practically, the task is to help people see Jesus, present and active in their lives, while leading them into deeper discipleship with him. This is a life-long experience of faith along a faith journey led by God's relational presence with each individual. God's call for Rev. Ann Osborne is to a ministry infused with the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual realities of congregants' life journeys with God. Rev. Osborne is called to encourage senior adult disciples of the Triune God as they live fruitfully, growing in faith, and recognizing God's presence with them regardless of the circumstances they encounter.

The goal of her ministry is to listen, support, encourage, and offer practical resources for individuals as they grieve past losses, discern the Spirit's leading toward a

new future, and set attainable goals to realize and respond to God's purpose and call. Rev. Osborne has many pastoral gifts that include prayer, worship leadership, preaching, pastoral care and visitation, and ministry to the dying and their families. She delights in working with others to effect leadership and transformational change, organizational development, spiritual formation, and thinking theologically.

There are now seven generations who co-exist together in local congregations and communities. What resources are available to assist caregivers supporting care-receivers who do not want to receive care? How do individuals advancing in age continue to grow and develop in their spiritual fruitfulness and connections with God? When people from ages sixty-five through ninety-plus years ask her if this is all there is to life, Rev. Osborne longs to offer them guidance, direction, and resources to encourage growth in their awareness of God's presence, love, and support as they age.

As researcher, Rev. Osborne anticipates the Model in Ministry will point to how a series of resources can be utilized by pastors, caregivers, chaplains, Stephen Ministers, Deacons, and family members of individuals experiencing the aging process. The Model in Ministry seeks to offer practical approaches to enable individuals to move through the exciting yet challenging call that God has for every individual for every single day of their lives.

The focus of the research questions is intended to understand how even the oldest members of a reformed congregation integrate faith in God as they experience the limitations of aging and more fragile quality of their lives. In numerous interviews conducted with faithful Christians who are fragile and no longer able to go and do things outside of their residences, this researcher has encountered the following responses. "My

faith no longer seems to matter to me.” “I can no longer ‘feel’ God’s presence with me.” “I’m not afraid of death, but I no longer sense God with me.” “Where has God gone? I’ve been a faithful Christian my whole life, but now I feel that I’m all alone!” Why is it that for a generation of the Church’s most faithful stewards and church builders, at the point of their greatest need in the aging process, the older “older adults” feel a sense of anomie and disconnectedness? How can the church best address the concerns of the very elderly Christians who no longer sense God’s direct presence in their lives?

As Chaplain at Hershey Medical Center, Rev. Osborne conducted qualitative research connecting symptoms of “Broken Heart Syndrome” with the presence of specific spiritual needs of the patients who experience the phenomena.³ If the presence of spiritual needs can affect the physical nature of the heart and its function, what then, will the sense that God is no longer present with them do to the quality, meaning, and significance of faith, life, health, and wholeness of older people? How can pastoral ministry respond in practical ways to alleviate the sense of disconnectedness the older “older adults” have from God? The research seeks to answer such questions.

Rev. Osborne’s passion and energy for the research ministry focus is based on observing how individuals age while maintaining their sense of dignity, autonomy, significance, meaning, and dependence upon a vital faith. She is aware of how many older adults deny their aging process despite failing health. She observes the way extremely dysfunctional families behave when trying to cope with aging parents with whom they cannot communicate or with whom they have little in common. Rev. Osborne feels the

³ Ann Osborne and Paul Derrickson, “Identifying Spiritual Needs in Patients Presenting with Chest Pain When Catheterization Reveals No Clinical Etiologies,” *Chaplaincy Today, The Journal of the Association of Professional Chaplains* 23, no. 2 (Autumn/Winter, 2003): 10.

pain and sadness of aging parents who are disappointed that their children are not ‘more like them’ in their values, faith experience, and normative lifestyles.

Relationships of all kinds have helped shape Rev. Osborne and her ministry project focus. In his early fifties, Joe Carmichael, her paternal grandfather, was diagnosed with emphysema from exposure to the sugar beet factory dust he inhaled while working in the factory during the depression. In his young adult years, Joe was an eloquent preacher in the tradition of Billy Sunday, filling revival tents on weekends in rural Nebraska. Grandpa Carmichael modeled for Rev. Osborne an unshakable faith in God, combined with dignity and courage in facing his illness head-on, while being cared for by his wife who berated him constantly for his disability and his failure to live up to her expectations of a healthy, able-bodied provider.

Rev. Osborne, when she was five, learned about the need for handicapped accessibility when she joined her grandpa on a tour of New York City, the Statue of Liberty, and Washington D.C. Grandma Carmichael not only grudgingly cared for Grandpa, but she also ran a personal care home for aging women providing them individual rooms, home cooked meals, laundry, and socialization. It was through Grandma Carmichael that Rev. Osborne first became exposed to the needs of aging women living alone and dependent upon her grandmother’s care. Filled with anger, resentment, and fear, this grandmother expressed a very vindictive, toxic fundamentalist understanding of a very judgmental and unforgiving God. She was emotionally and physically abusive to her children, grandchildren, and, most likely, the women for whom she cared in the personal care home, which she operated.

Rev. Osborne's maternal grandmother, Judith, was a saint who glowed with love for God and for all people. Towards the end of life, Judith's granddaughter and her husband would visit Judith in a nursing home. Despite being an amputee and blind in both eyes, Judith was the most joyful and optimistic woman one could ever encounter. When Rev. Osborne asked if she could push her grandmother down the hall, Judith laughingly replied that as she could not see and her wheel chair took up so much space, it would be better for the couple to simply sit and be present with her. Judith taught Rev. Osborne her first lessons about the needs of the elderly and the ministry of presence.

Aron, Rev. Osborne's maternal grandfather, was a carpenter and cabinetmaker his entire life. At ninety-six when his dementia became evident, Aron was the neighborhood grandpa, visiting all the stay-at-home mothers and their children.

As Rev. Osborne engages in the current model for her ministry research, she is ever conscious that all of life is about God. Rev. Osborne is excited by how God is working through ordinary people and events to effect God's reign in the present world. Rev. Osborne approaches the world by thinking theologically. She enjoys the practice of intellectual learning, completing research, and engaging in critical reflection. Her energy and DMIN research passion is to identify and recommend practical ways for how fragile seniors can relate to God even as they struggle with concerns about meaning, significance, and value when they are no longer able to 'do' anything. It is anticipated that pastors, congregational members, caregivers, and family members of aging adults may find the recommendations practical and beneficial in their outreach to seniors.

On October 9, 2011, Rev. Osborne was installed as the Associate Minister for Congregational Care and Senior Ministry, having completed a four-year temporary

contract with the church. During the four-year tenure, she supported nearly two hundred families as they experienced the aging process of parents or spouses. This minister has participated with more than one hundred families who have walked the journeys of palliative care and death with loved ones. Rev. Osborne has explored emerging gifts of preaching, worship leadership, and helping churches to implement transformational change.

Context of Project Ministry Focus

Rev. Osborne's ministry focus is to a multi-generational Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) community of faithful followers of Jesus who exist together to serve God through worship, prayer and mission outreach to hurting people. This congregation desires to nurture and enjoy one another as limited, imperfect, broken, yet forgiven children of God. Rev. Osborne's sense of significance and meaning as a Minister of Word and Sacrament is to be present with and empower people who are dealing with change and transition, yet who seek to remain faithful to God in seeking where and how God is calling them next to respond and serve.

Rev. Osborne applies her skills in transformative leadership, preaching, administering the Sacraments, worship leadership, and pastoral care. In addition, as researcher, she offers spiritual direction, and teaching in her ministry with older adults, the dying, and grieving families. She represents God's physical presence *with* individuals who seek God's grace and love. Using humor, compassion, love, and high energy, Rev. Osborne responds daily to God's call to her congregation.

During her five-year ministry, Rev. Osborne has kindled members' imaginations, sparked new energy in prayer, and called their attention to God's leadership. She strongly supported members who implemented new and re-invigorated maturing ministries. The Board of Deacons has redefined their call, adding visits to homebound individuals who can no longer travel to church. To support the more fragile individuals with mobility concerns, the Deacons have added valet parking and new transportation options to the compassion and care ministries they offer.

Envisioning expanding opportunities for older adult ministry and training new leadership, Rev. Osborne has fulfilled the tasks necessary to implement a thriving Senior Ministry Plan, which was only an idea when she arrived. Creative senior adults have planned and implemented appropriate social, recreational, travel, singles, health-care, educational, and discipleship development ministries serving folks aged 55 through 104.

Stephen Ministry has grown from fifteen to twenty-four laity caregivers, while more than doubling the number of care-receivers served. A Knitter Group, Sweet Hour of Prayer, Parish Visitors, Grief and Caregiver Support Groups, Neighborhood Kindred Kirks, Spiritual Life Team, Dedicated Sunday School for all ages, Home and Communion prep teams, renewed joy, and congregational fellowship are some groups and activities that Rev. Osborne has helped to ignite within the past five years through the gifts God has bestowed. God has empowered members of all ages to become new leaders to further the newly formed ministries.

Rev. Osborne's leadership at Highland is evidenced by 771 older adults who participate in the numerous activities recently initiated by a thriving Senior Ministry leadership team comprised of eighteen members. From lunches to road trips, the Senior

Adults at Highland are a very interactive group. The active Senior Adults who are able to participate in the many activities and events offered through the church are disconnected from the more fragile homebound individuals. Do the more active Seniors choose not to visit or associate with the more fragile members, perhaps because they hope that they will not end up in such a fragile condition? Are the individuals who are no longer able to drive or get out to church activities angry or depressed because their fragile situation prevents them from doing so?

Table 1.1 details the significance of Highland's Senior Adults by drawing attention to their large numbers and high percentage of Highland's total membership. The overall conclusion this data presents is that 51.2 percent of the Highland congregation is 60 years of age or older with the highest concentration in the 70-79 year old group. The mean age is 66.7.

Table 1.1. Aging Adults at Highland Presbyterian Church

Age Category	Number in Range	Percentage in Category	Percentage of Total Membership
60-64	148	19.2	9.8
65-69	128	16.6	8.5
70-79	259	33.6	17.2
80-89	194	25.2	12.9
90-99	41	5.3	2.7
100 & +	1	.1	.1
Total	771	100.0	51.2

Source: Data adapted All Church System Database Management System Technology (accessed October 1, 2011).

Extrapolating qualitative information from data may require the researcher to employ inferential statistics, which can be a valuable resource in studying groups within a larger group. "Using a small part to make conclusions about a whole larger thing sometimes strikes people as being counterintuitive, but the ability to make such

conclusions using inferential methods is one of the important applications of statistics.”⁴

Since the median age group is the 70-79 age category, which is greater than the mean, this indicates there is an abnormal distribution of the ages.⁵ From table 1.1, the researcher can discern that 495 of the 771 aging adults or 64 percent of this age group are 70 years of age or older. Numbers of this magnitude and concentration within an aging sector of Highland’s congregation more than likely will have a major impact on the future ministry and programs that operate at Highland.

Currently, Highland Presbyterian Church has a total intergenerational membership of 1,507 confirmed members. However, there are 216 additional non-member “friends of Highland.”⁶ Since their ages are not verified, the non-members are excluded from the statistical assessment; however, anecdotally, it is evident that the majority of these individuals are aged 50 and older. The congregation has historically relied upon three clergy to support the leadership of its eighteen member Session, eighteen member Board of Deacons, and fifteen Trustees. At present, a wide range of generations worship together each Sunday morning in three worship services: a blended service at 9:00 a.m. and two simultaneous services—contemporary and traditional—at 10:30 a.m. while Discipleship Development classes for all ages are at 9:00 a.m. The early, more informal, blended service lasts fifty minutes and uses projected contemporary worship songs and choruses, videos, and creative interactive approaches to prayer and liturgy. The traditional service in the Sanctuary involves the more historic hymns, liturgies, and classical music

⁴ David M. Levine and David F. Stephen, *Even You Can Learn Statistics: A Guide for Everyone Who Has Ever Been Afraid of Statistics*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc. Publishing as FT Press, 2010), 119.

⁵ Levine and Stephen, *Even You Can Learn Statistics*, 57-59.

⁶ Beverly Geib, Highland Business Manager, e-mail message to project editor (March 29, 2012).

supported by a pipe organ and a seventy-five voice choir, with formal orders of worship used to guide congregants through the worship service. The contemporary service is held in the Fellowship Hall and involves the use of four different worship bands, videos, and a more relaxed approach to sharing the Word and Sacrament.

The chart in table 1.2 illustrates Highland's distribution of the various age groups and clearly reveals that the Church is a senior citizen dominated congregation. If 41 percent of the congregation are 65 and above, what impact does this have on the future of Highland? How active are these elder members of the congregation?

Table 1.2. Highland Presbyterian Church Distribution by Age and Membership

Category	Age Distribution	Total Number in Range	% of Total Membership
Senior Adults	65+	623	41
Adults	40-64	554	37
Young Adults	20-39	198	13
Youth	13-19	48	3
Children	0-12	84	6
Total		1507	100

Source: Data adapted from Highland Presbyterian Church Management Membership by Age. All Church System Database Management System Technology (accessed October 1, 2011).

Based on the data in table 1.2, it is clear that the concentration of membership is definitely toward the aging seniors. Since Lancaster County is a retirement destination and Highland has such a strong ministry to retired individuals, it will continue to offer a strong attraction for new retirees who move into the county. However, as the congregation continues to age, observant leaders on the Session are grappling with the following questions. Who will pick up the leadership role in the church structure? Who will help minister to the rapidly aging population of Highland? How does Highland generate an appeal to young families to become members of Highland when they may view it as a church for "old folks"? Who will walk this journey with the graying

generation through their advancing aging process? The sparse numbers in the bottom two groups, Youth and Children, is indicative that newer members of the congregation are not coming from Young Adults and the 40 to 50 year old groups. How does this congregation involve all ages of membership? What new outreach strategies must Highland take to continue to appeal to the multi-generational evangelism goals it has set for itself? The chart in table 1.3 re-enforces the point that the age distribution of the Highland membership is not a normal, symmetrical distribution. With 78 percent of the membership falling in the Senior Adults and Adult categories, the conclusion is that Highland's membership is a highly skewed one. Perhaps an additional challenge to Highland is the issue of the aging population, and how does Highland support them? After all, we are commanded to "Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the aged."⁷

Table 1.3 Highland Presbyterian Church Age Distribution

Category		Total # in Category	% of Total Membership
Senior Adults	65+	623	41
Adults	40-64	554	37
Young Adults	20-39	198	13
Youth	13-19	48	3
Children	0-12	84	6
Total		1507	100

Source: Data adapted from Highland Presbyterian Church Management Membership by Age. All Church System Database Management System Technology (accessed: October 1, 2011).

Of the total number of seniors, approximately two hundred and fifty individuals possess significant health issues or severe aging conditions that may make them be prime candidates for the researcher's ministry model. Many of these individuals live in their

⁷ Lev.19:32 (NIV).

own homes, while others reside in the twenty-six major continuing care retirement communities within a fifteen-mile radius of the church. How to help members come to church when they can no longer drive is also a concern for Highland.⁸

On May 18, 1958, a group of young adults from three downtown Lancaster Presbyterian Churches met together on the outskirts of rural Manheim Township in a local poultry-processing center to charter a new church development. This group purchased twenty-seven acres of undeveloped farmland along Oregon Pike, within one mile of U.S. Route 30, the major east-west highway connecting Lancaster to Philadelphia to the east and York to the west. Highland actively supports all seven generations that worship at Highland, but over half of membership is comprised of newly retired Boomers and members of the Silent, Builder, and Great Generations.

The four year contracted call to ministry for the Designated Associate Pastor for Congregational Care was extended to Rev. Ann M. Osborne on September 1, 2007. Rev. Osborne's original purpose was to bridge the gap left by an extended medical leave of absence of the recently called Associate Pastor. It was anticipated that Rev. Osborne would fill the vacancy until the Associate Pastor could return to her call. The search for a new Senior Pastor was underway with the clergy team consisting of an honorably retired minister serving as the Interim Senior Pastor and an installed Associate Pastor for Family Ministries who was in the third year of his first call.

Rev. Osborne's initial call was to provide pastoral care to the entire congregation through home visits, regular hospital visitation, and regular visitation to homebound and senior members living in twenty-six retirement communities within Lancaster County.

⁸ Rev. Ann Osborne, Senior Ministry Pastor at Highland Presbyterian Church, personal reflection.

Her position included offering ministries of care and support to individuals facing end of life and aging concerns as well as offering support to their families. Not to be overlooked was her support during the death and dying process as well as follow up with long-term grief. The call also included providing pastoral leadership to the Board of Deacons; a growing Stephen Ministry with twenty-eight trained caregivers; a healthy volunteer Parish Nurse program; a twenty member Parish Visitation Team; a laity led Home Communion Team; the Kindred Kirks; the Care and Compassion Council; and the Spiritual Life Envisioning Team. Additionally, the call involved establishing small group and discipleship building opportunities to emphasize prayer, spiritual disciplines, spiritual nurturing, and congregational health support for all members. An evolving call resulted in the envisioning and establishment of a strong Senior Adult Ministry program for individuals aged sixty-five and older. Such ministries now involve visitation, transportation, social, recreational, and discipleship development experiences, as well as the increasing need to activate a new 40+ Singles Ministry.

Based on her twenty-five year history as a certified Christian Educator, in June of 2010 Rev. Osborne's call was expanded to include the envisioning, development, and implementation of a dedicated Discipleship Development (Sunday School) hour for adults, youth, and children which began on September 12, 2010.⁹ This Sunday morning time provided classes specific to the interests and life skills for senior adults. During the next year, it became evident to Rev. Osborne that aging adults need a venue to continue learning about discipleship, life transitions, and ways to remain fruitful in their faith journeys.

⁹ Ann Osborne, "Christian Education Committee October 2010 Report" (report presented at the monthly meeting of the Session of Highland Presbyterian Church Lancaster, PA, October 5, 2010).

Following the publication of the 2007 Mission Study Committee's report, Highland has attempted to comply with several recommendations that the congregation seek a more meaningful purpose as a Christian community. Included in these recommendations were the expressed desires to see more discipleship as well as the opportunities for spiritual growth and a more fruitful life, especially among the aging adults.¹⁰ The conclusion of the 2007 Mission Study Committee succinctly summarizes the social nature of Highland Church:

As a congregation, we are a diverse collection of individual talents, brains, skills, and gifts. Many members are highly accomplished in their chosen professions. Many are deeply spiritual, committed, caring, active, and dedicated to their faith in Jesus Christ. The success of the senior pastor will hinge on harnessing these people, binding us together in the love of Christ, and giving us a sense of mission for the good of Highland and above all for the glory of God.¹¹

The future challenge of Rev. Osborne's ministry context is that the vast majority of the congregation is aging. Annually, a greater number of older adults join Highland's congregation than do young adults. On the street, Highland is known as the place for senior adults to gather and connect with God and with one another. The strong pastoral care and senior adult ministries that have flourished over the past five years continue to attract and encourage retirees to visit, worship, and join Highland's relational faith community.¹² As the membership that historically has been relied on to care for older members also begins to require nurturing and pastoral care support, there are greater opportunities to train younger congregants to listen to and care for the more fragile older members.

¹⁰ Report of the Highland Presbyterian Church Mission Study Committee, "Mission Study Report" (Lancaster, PA: November, 2007), 17.

¹¹ Ibid., 18.

¹² Osborne, personal reflection.

Since the Mission Study Report came out, many changes have been implemented. In 2009, the church doubled its physical plant by celebrating the opening of a 40,000 square foot addition including a 15,000 square foot narthex, a fully operable basketball court and gymnasium, new Christian Education facilities, new preschool space, new youth and senior adult facilities.¹³ Beginning in September of 2010, worship times changed to enable a dedicated time for Christian Education and a new informal worship experienced designed to attract young adults and young families with children.¹⁴

In November of 2010, the church served 565 members in a fellowship meal as part of its Consecration Sunday activities.¹⁵ On November 12, 2010, fourteen acres of the original property were dedicated by a groundbreaking to build “The Long Community at Highland” as a senior residential rental community under the ownership and management of the Presbyterian Homes, Inc., a completely separate organization operated through support from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) denomination. This event fulfilled Highland charter members’ initial vision that one day a portion of the property they purchased would serve as a site to support retirement living for senior adults who could potentially attend Highland Church. The first 52 new tenants moved into the Assisted Living section of the facility on January 17, 2012. It is anticipated that Highland Presbyterian Church will be intentional in inviting and recruiting the new residents of the Long Community to participate in Highland’s worship, ministry, and mission.¹⁶

¹³ Highland Presbyterian Church, “Annual Report 2009 to the Congregation” (Lancaster, PA: January 2010).

¹⁴ Osborne, “Christian Education,” October 5, 2010.

¹⁵ Barbara Mobley, “Stewardship Committee for Consecration Sunday Report,” (report presented at the monthly meeting of the Session of Highland Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, PA, December 7, 2010).

¹⁶ Doug Good, “Liaison Report on Long Home,” (report presented to the monthly meeting the Session of Highland Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, PA, January 24, 2012).

Communication is essential to maintaining an informed congregation. Highland has made great strides in establishing new technology and methods for enhancing clear communication among members and leadership. Information and updates are shared through email, web-based newsletters, special mailings, and an upgraded web site, while Magic-board flat screen video information loops on monitors located throughout the church's hallways and narthex. Perhaps one of the most important results of the recent building program is the new narthex. This asset allows for more informal 'open forum' conversations and face-to-face fellowship gatherings before, between, and after Sunday services between all ages of the congregation.

The church promotes reaching out to all members to encourage participation and leadership roles in all aspects of Highland's life. Due to this initiative, new faces are volunteering to teach Word and Worship, Discipleship Development, and Wednesday Walk with Christ classes. Furthermore, new members are being invited to join committees and serve as missional church leaders. Intergenerational mission outreach teams and worship teams are forming to implement exciting new mission projects in local, national, and international settings.

A new Consecration Stewardship campaign is focusing upon what God is calling individuals to give to God as a spiritual discipline instead of simply responding to the needs of an operating budget. There is a sense of excitement and enthusiasm for all the new ways in which God is inviting people to respond to the movement of the Holy Spirit in their midst as Highland strives to be the shining light on the hill.

For some, the changes seem to be overwhelming. There is significant anxiety in the system as individuals respond to many transitions: a new Senior Pastor with great

ideas for new vision and mission for Highland's ministries; new worship schedules; new programs; and emerging, generationally oriented ministries. Members are navigating the changing social dynamics by responding with spontaneity, focus upon process, engaging with transformative learning and leadership, and trusting in either their newfound or renewed reliance upon God's leadership through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Aging seniors, along with other congregational members, are experiencing institutional changes while also dealing with their own personal experience of transition and moving from a life of independence to one of dependence on others. Realizing change occurs around them and that life itself is dynamic and not static is re-assuring to the seniors. Recognizing they are not alone and that others are going through this transformational journey as they are can be very comforting.

The members of Highland Presbyterian Church, as a microcosm of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), represent the diverse theological convictions along a broad continuum from ultra-conservative to ultra-liberal. The church thrives together, sharing in the diversity and fellowship of multiple viewpoints and theological perspectives. A strength of this congregation is that they are not an 'issue-based' congregation but instead seek to worship together as "A People Following Jesus."

The congregation learns from the many voices, viewpoints, and theological perspectives represented in its diverse membership. Individuals respect and value one another for the love each has for the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, congregants enjoy fellowship and maintain a sense of strong community. Educational programs reflect this broad perspective with classes and small groups to suit the variety of theological perspectives and viewpoints.

Historically, the congregation has not been interested or engaged in the political issues being argued at the national levels of the denomination. The spiritual ethos of the congregation remains one of support, collegiality, and outreach in mission and ministry, pastoral care, and spiritual and discipleship development. Highland's Mission statement reflects the goal of providing creative ways to nurture the needs of its congregants. Highland seeks to fulfill its responsibility to serve as a caretaker of God's Kingdom. This also means Highland is to train and send forth caretakers who fruitfully serve the Kingdom. According to Scott Rodin in *Stewards in the Kingdom: A Theology of Life in All Its Fullness*, the church is "formed to carry out a call by God to be the bride of Christ for his work in the world."¹⁷ With this call, come four responsibilities:

1. The church deepens and strengthens members' relationship to God through worship and fellowship.
2. The church strives to raise up disciples who are taught the Word of God.
3. The church serves the community by helping heal the brokenness and lostness of the oppressed and those who are in need.
4. The church is an advocate the stewardship of all creations including the church's own resources.¹⁸

Desiring to grow as a congregation that reaches out to the needs of people in its local neighborhood and community, Highland offers its members of all age groups, including aging seniors, a myriad of opportunities to be servants in the Kingdom of God. Included in such opportunities are the mission fields beyond the doors of Highland

¹⁷ R. Scott Rodin, *Stewards in the Kingdom: A Theology of Life in All Its Fullness*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000): 181.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Presbyterian Church. The 2007 Highland Mission Study Report also offered a membership assessment:

We need to face the fact that a large percentage of our middle class suburban membership has yet to really begin their spiritual journey. By this, we mean that many members cannot or will not find ways to connect the real meaning of membership at Highland. This may be largely due to the culture they find themselves in (including their own family and upbringing) or the many distractions they find in life. We are a busy people!¹⁹

The Study Committee also recognized the strong desire of the membership for an “authentic sense of belonging, purpose, and relationship.”²⁰ Such a desire is strong in the lives of the senior members, many who struggle with multiple losses and grief related to aging and the illnesses and deaths of friends, family members, and spouses.

Missions have continually served to unite the congregation, even in times of conflict. Highland’s physical sweat equity and monetary contribution to community, global, and local missions are one of its most outstanding strengths. Most of Highland’s membership possess a more affluent and educated lifestyle than the majority of the residents of Lancaster County. Community service is a strong tradition, and many Highland members are very active leaders in government, civic, and social endeavors in Manheim Township, Lancaster City, and Lancaster County.²¹

An emerging concern of the congregation’s leadership is how Christ is calling Highland’s members to respond to the unique and particular struggles of Lancaster City, the county seat, with its population of nearly 60,000 marginalized, poor, Caucasian (54 percent), Hispanic (30.8 percent), African-American (14.1 percent) and Asian-American

¹⁹ Report of the Mission Study Committee, “Mission Study Report”, 17.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

(2.5 percent) residents. The question is what the affluent, suburban, aging members of Highland Church can accomplish to assist in the revitalization of downtown and selected corridors. Instead of allocating time and resources to feel-good projects that do not have any effective and lasting change, Highland's outreach efforts could focus upon the practical support of the homeless, the hungry, the unemployed, and the undereducated.²²

Highland's commitment to local missions is extensive. Members help provide school uniforms for the children of the Lancaster School District, support the Homeless Students Summer Camp at the Presbytery's Camp Donegal, and help prepare the food distribution for hungry children through the Power Packs Project.

Known among the social agencies in Lancaster County as the "Mission Church," Highland's members have a long history of faithfully donating food items to the Lancaster Food Bank, contributing clothes to the Lancaster Clothing Bank, tutoring non-English speaking immigrants, and visiting homebound members. Now, Highland has begun mentoring Prison Ministry trainees to support newly released citizens in the community. However, when the infirmities and limitations of the aging process prevent Highland members from actively participating onsite or by going on mission trips, the ministry of intercessory prayer is a direct way where people that are more fragile are able to contribute to God's work in the larger world.

Should Highland members support missions closer to home rather than only sending people on mission trips to Appalachia or El Salvador?²³ Jesus commands us to love our neighbors, and He did not limit that love to one locality. Instead, Christ tells us

²² Report of the Mission Study Committee, "Mission Study Report", 17.

²³ Ibid.

“All authority has been give to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age.”²⁴

Highland’s senior members struggle with issues of interdependence, isolation, poor health, and diminishing resources while also confronting the life-death reality.²⁵ Their task is to discover how to remain fruitful in their relationship and sense of God’s presence with them, even when they are unable to personally go on community and global mission trips, or engage in local outreach projects. Are there ways for the more fragile seniors to participate in community and global mission while honoring the limitations of their own aging process? The challenge of the Model in Ministry is to address the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual elements of parishioners’ journeys with aging as spiritual and faith development process. The Model in Ministry project explores how the senior adult disciples of Jesus Christ remain fruitful and live a life of spiritual growth and maturity, even as they encounter the joys and challenges of aging.

²⁴ Matt. 28:18-20 New American Standard Bible (NASB).

²⁵ Rodin, *Stewards*, 124.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

The Project Ministry Model establishes a design and plan for implementation and evaluation of an approach to ministry for replication and application by others engaged in pastoral care. The model developed will address the various research design possibilities, organize the elements of the total project, and propose a realistic period for completion.¹

Chapter Two describes the researcher's familiarity with significant concepts and ideas supporting the ministry model by offering definitions for several of the significant concepts that serve as the framework for the ministry model. An examination of background information for what constitutes 'state of the art' research and spiritual support models emerging in pastoral care to support the Ministry Project further elaborates on this evolving discipline.

Background

This doctoral ministry project seeks to understand how the more aged and fragile attendees of a large Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation integrate faith in God with their own limitations of aging and a more fragile quality of life. The research focuses upon individuals advancing in age, who are connected in some manner to the

¹ Doctorate of Ministry Study Committee, *Doctorate of Ministry Student Handbook* (Dayton, OH: United Theological Seminary (August 2010), 50.

researcher's ministry context. Some field research participants report experiencing questions about meaning and significance due to physical, emotional, or spiritual challenges brought about from the aging process. Others appear to be experiencing challenges with the fragility of their individual life circumstances as they adjust to the aging process. Some are struggling to identify a sense of meaning and significance in their connections and relationship with God as they each perceive and understand what and whom God is. The objective of the project is to identify new opportunities for this particular group of older members to value themselves (1) as having significance and meaning as God's beloved children, and (2) as experiencing a fruitfulness of faith.

Dr. Harold G. Koenig's groundbreaking research in 1988 connects medicine, spirituality, religion, and meaning² to the ongoing findings by current researchers from the disciplines of nursing, chaplaincy, hospice and palliative care, pastoral care, and church growth. Rev. Osborne's field research seeks to build upon this research in an effort to encourage fragile aging individuals to enhance their fruitfulness in faith, quality of life, and ability to flourish.

The number of people who now live to the age of 90 has increased from 14 percent in 1960 to 25 percent. The US Census figures predict that in 2050, 40 percent of current 65 year olds will live to see their 90th birthday.³ In the researcher's context

² Koenig, H.G., M. Smiley, and J.A.P. Gonzales, *Religion, Health and Aging: A Review and Theoretical Integration* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1988). Quoted by Melvin A. Kimble, *et al.* eds. 1995. *Aging, Spirituality, and Religion: A Handbook 1* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress), 9-29.

³ National Center for Health Statistics Bureau. Experience Corps. Fact Sheet on Aging in America, U.S. Census Bureau, 2003. <http://www.experiencecorps.org/images/pdf/Fact%20Sheet.pdf> (accessed November 11, 2011).

setting, 41 members of Highland Presbyterian Church are aged 90 years or older. One person is 100 years of age. There are 194 members between 80 and 89 years of age.⁴

A continuing issue for individuals who work with aging adults is the lack of an agreed upon definition for the term “fragile aging”. In March of 2006, the National Institute on Aging, a division of the National Institute of Health, issued a request for research projects to determine an operational definition. The background information gave the following definition:

Frailty has been used clinically as a global concept to describe a condition common in the very old, of impaired strength, endurance, and balance, vulnerability to trauma and other stressors, and high risk for morbidity, disability and mortality. It may add clinical value in prognosis and decision-making because frail older persons may have additional pathophysiologic or functional changes not captured fully by disease and disability definitions.⁵

Australian researcher Dr. Elizabeth MacKinlay has identified a final life stage termed the fourth age “when the person may become more aware of one’s own mortality and begin preparing for dying and death.”⁶ Her research contends that the tasks involved during this stage are to discover one’s own sense of ‘ultimate meaning.’ Such transition occurs when one is able to transcend losses, disability, diminished energy, and pain to realize the meaning of life. Individuals discover hope amidst the fragility and suffering.

⁴ Highland Presbyterian Church Membership List by Age. All Church Systems Database Management System. (accessed October 1, 2011).

⁵ National Institute of Health. “Frailty in Old Age: Pathophysiology and Interventions,” Grant information for PA released May 13, 2003, <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAS-03-122.html> (accessed November 11, 2011).

⁶ Elizabeth MacKinlay, *Spiritual Growth and Care in the Fourth Age of Life* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006), 211.

Despite the pain, they discover intimacy with God and others.⁷ Thus, MacKinlay emphasizes the need for pastoral care:

There will be the need to process and revise provisional life-meanings that were set down in earlier life, perhaps to seek reconciliation with others, to celebrate life and to say goodbye to family and friends. Pastoral care may be very important at these times. On the other hand, some older people will continue to deny death and not wish to speak of it.⁸

MacKinlay's findings give support to the model proposed by James W. Fowler where he describes six stages of faith development through which some people move as they grow in faith. Following infancy, where faith appears to be undifferentiated, an individual may move through: (1) Intuitive-Projective—aged two through seven; (2) Mythic-Literal—aged seven through thirteen; (3) Synthetic-Conventional—adolescence to adulthood; (4) Individuative-Reflective—aged thirties to forties; (5) Conjunctive—mid life; and (6) Universalizing—older adult. “The self at Stage 6 engages in spending and being spent for the transformation of present reality in the direction of a transcendent actuality.”⁹

Although individuals who attain the universalizing faith stage are rarely identified among participants in Fowler's studies, such individuals have an internal awareness that “ultimate environment is inclusive of all being. They have become incarnators and actualizers of the spirit of an inclusive and fulfilled human community.”¹⁰ Fowler states,

⁷ MacKinley, *Spiritual Growth and Care in the Fourth Age of Life*, 212.

⁸ Ibid., 211-212.

⁹ James W. Fowler, “Perspectives on the Family from the Standpoint of Faith Development Theory,” *The Perkins Journal* 33, no. 1 (Fall 1979): 200.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Universalizers . . . have a special grace that makes them seem more lucid, more simple and yet somehow more fully human than the rest of us. Their community is universal in extent . . . Life is both loved and held to loosely. Such persons are ready for fellowship with persons at any of the other stages and from any other faith tradition.¹¹

Both MacKinlay and Fowler posit that as people age, they have the choice to move from one faith stage to another finally reaching a stage of transcendence where they achieve intimacy with God, others and self. Some choose to move upward through the stages, while others remain stuck in a particular faith stage that may preclude their ability to experience or feel a sense of connectedness to God.

This process of movement into a new stage of experience is also emphasized in the most recent work of Joan M. Erikson. “In the pursuit of following how aged people face the deterioration of their bodies and faculties, gerotricians have begun to use the word “transcendence” to describe a state that some aging persons develop and retain.”¹² Quoting the work of Swedish psychologist Lars Tornstam, who terms the process *gerotranscendence*, Erikson defines the final stage of life as “*transcendence*” by elaborating on its characteristics:

Transcendence becomes very much alive if it is activated into ‘*transcendence*’, which speaks to soul and body and challenges it to rise above the dystonic, clinging aspects of our worldly existence that burden and distract us from true growth and aspiration. To reach for *gerotranscendence* is to rise above, exceed, outdo, go beyond, independent of the universe and time. It involves surpassing all human knowledge and experience. *Transcendence* may be a regaining of lost skills, including play, activity, joy and song, and above all, a major leap above and beyond the fear of death. It provides an opening forward into the unknown with a trusting leap. Oddly enough, this all demands of us an honest and steadfast humility.¹³

¹¹ Fowler, “Perspectives on the Family”, 13-14.

¹² Joan M. Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed (With Extended Version with New Chapters on the Ninth Stage of Development)* (New York: W.W. Norton, Inc., 1997), 123.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 127.

To the contrary, Rev. Osborne has observed that some fragile, aging individuals feel estranged from God and experience faith crisis. These persons exhibit significant spiritual doubt that all they have come to trust about the Christian faith is true. They report feelings of complete disconnectedness and anomie, rather than the sense that life is a wonderful dance which thrills and brings “one into all realms of making and doing with every item of body, mind and spirit involved.”¹⁴

Through interviews conducted with nearly one hundred fragile aging individuals over a span of five years, this researcher has encountered more than thirty people who reported this experience. Such self-reported experiences of congregants furthered Rev. Osborne’s realization that previous tools for supporting fragile yet mentally agile parishioners are insufficient to respond to the emerging faith crises and experiences of spiritual doubt faced by some aging Christians.

Is the faith crisis among fragile, aging Christians generated because such individuals no longer experience a sense of meaning and significance in their outer world, which is then transferred to their relationship and emotional awareness of the divine? Has the mainline reformed Protestant tradition and Puritan work ethic so imbued the faith experience of the “Builder” and “Great” Generations that they have no faith experience apart from their work for God? Is this crisis of faith a normal developmental phase of the fragile aging process? Is it possible to help individuals undergoing such an experience to move to a new place of faith based upon the ‘fruitfulness of being’ rather than the ‘significance of doing’? Such are the questions that undergird this research. The researcher designed the responsive field interviews in the hope of responding to such

¹⁴ Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed*, 127.

fragile aging process? Is it possible to help individuals undergoing such an experience to move to a new place of faith based upon the ‘fruitfulness of being’ rather than the ‘significance of doing’? Such are the questions that undergird this research. The researcher designed the responsive field interviews in the hope of responding to such questions. The ministry research model draws upon previous research findings related to meaning and significance. This Ministry Project uses such findings as a foundation for going beyond their work to understand how individuals can flourish in their sense of well-being, quality of life, and spiritual nurturing to be fruitful in faith.

The Importance of Meaning, Significance, and Fruitfulness in Faith

Most human beings possess the need to have a personal sense of one’s own meaning and significance. From experiments with factory workers at the Hawthorne Western Electric Works in Chicago from 1927-1932, researchers discovered that as individuals become aware of being studied, their behaviors change. Known as the Hawthorne Effect, this principle recognizes that research participants will improve or modify an aspect of the behavior that is measured experimentally as a reactive response of knowing that the behavior is under study rather than in response to any particular experimental manipulation.¹⁵

In their study, Hugh Miller and Charles Fox observed that researchers use perception and cognitive skills in the research process thus endowing the object or study participant with value and significance. By virtue of the study process itself, when attention is placed upon objects and ideas, they receive a sense of meaning and

¹⁵ R. McCarney, et al. "The Hawthorne Effect: a randomised, controlled trial". [doi:10.1186/147-2288-7-30](https://doi.org/10.1186/147-2288-7-30) (accessed November 11, 2011).

we think of as scientific method has not simplified human behavior; instead, it has shown us just how complex human behavior really is.”¹⁷ They conclude that the participant’s awareness that one is in an experiment may have a more powerful impact upon a person’s behavior than any particular experimental element.¹⁸

Abraham Maslow and Viktor Frankl had much to say about how individuals understand their own sense of meaning and significance. Maslow’s theories are succinctly summarized in the well-known Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs model, which posits how individuals move from basic survival needs to a sense of self-actualization in their quest for significance and meaning.¹⁹

Frankl noted that humans derive life’s meaning through three experiences: (1) performing an action or deed; (2) experiencing and giving love; and (3) having a personal experience of suffering.²⁰ He states, “Man’s search for meaning is a primary force in his life. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance that will satisfy his own will to meaning.”²¹ Known for the development of “logotherapy,” Frankl’s psycho-therapeutic approach helps assist individuals to discover the personal meaning in life by incorporating one’s spiritual needs into the self-analytical process. Frankl writes,

¹⁷ Ralph Rosnow and Robert Rosenthal, *People Studying People: Artifacts and Ethics in Behavioral Research* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1997), 2.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Maslow. “Hierarchy of Needs” Google search.
https://www.google.com/search?q=maslow's+hierarchy+of+needs&hl=en&rlz=1T4TSNO_enUS458US458&prmd=imvns&tbo=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=j_d9T_fwJoWW8gTD9OSIDg&ved=0CEwQsAQ&biw=1600&bih=712 (accessed April 6, 2012).

²⁰ Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (New York, NY: Beacon Press, 1959), 178.

²¹ Ibid., 154.

Logo therapy . . . considers man as a being whose main concern consists in fulfilling a meaning and in actualizing values, rather than in the mere gratification and satisfaction of drives and instincts, the mere reconciliation of the conflicting claims of id, ego and superego, or mere adaptation and adjustment to the society and environment.²²

Frankl concluded that the true purpose for human existence is not to become self-actualized but rather to experience self-transcendence. The harder a person tries to be self-actualized, the less likely one is to achieve it.²³ Thus, Frankl maintains, “For only to the extent to which man commits himself to the fulfillment of his life’s meaning, to this extent he also actualizes himself . . . self-actualization cannot be attained if it is made an end in itself but only as a side effect of self-transcendence.”²⁴

In her studies of fragile nursing home residents in Australia, Elizabeth MacKinlay discovered that when residents lose the ability to live independently, this becomes a significant and real loss. Independent living symbolizes the ability to have autonomous charge over the basic aspects of living, especially the opportunity for intimacy, connections with the outer world, and an overall lack of control for one’s own freedom. Arriving at the decision to transfer from living independently to a nursing home can be one of the most difficult decisions made by the individual and family.²⁵

Scripture, church members, pollsters, theologians, and individuals who offer pastoral care grapple with how to encourage people who are in the middle of the aging process to be fruitful in their faith. In addition to encouraging discussion and awareness,

²² Frankl, *Man’s Search*, 164.

²³ *Ibid.*, 175.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ MacKinlay, *Spiritual Growth and Care in the Fourth Age of Life*, 204.

research not only supports this concern, but it also is revealing ways to help this group make life's transition smoother. How can autonomy, intimacy, fellowship, and a sense of control for one's own life be assured when more fragile older adults are unable to actively connect with the larger world around them? How can fruitful faith be encouraged in the midst of the challenges related to identity, meaning, significance, and having value to oneself, others, and God?

The Barna Group has indicated that more individuals report having no connection to a church during the last twenty-year period. Eight percent more of Busters (aged 30-45) and Elders (aged 70 and older) reported having no church connection. Eighteen percent more of Boomers (aged 50-69) reported lack of church connection. Since 1991, the number of Elders who left small or mid-sized churches in order to attend large congregations increased by 150 percent. Of the age groups who reported church attendance, elders were the most likely of the adult generations to involve themselves in major religious behaviors (praying, reading scripture, going to church, etc.). This group reported having the greatest affinity with a church and held beliefs that most readily follow biblical precepts. In an ever-increasing effort to stave off aging and retirement, Boomers have been distancing themselves from traditional religious practices and understandings.²⁶ Perhaps this distancing is due to their self-perceived experience of independence rather than interdependence with other people.

What do these statistics mean in the context of the aging process? Does the movement away from an organized church setting have to do with people's sense of their

²⁶ The George Barna blog. <http://www.georgebarna.com/2011/07/comments-on-july-27-barna-update-barna-describes-religious-changes-among-busters-boomers-and-elders-since-1991/#comments> (accessed November 11, 2011).

faith development or have they become ‘bored’ with the traditional ways that churches communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Could it be linked with the movement of culture away from the reliance upon institutions or because of excessive media influences? The life experiences, needs, and patterns of longevity of older adults are in the midst of a monumental transformation. More than ever before, older adults are living longer, doing more work and volunteerism, and postponing retirement.

According to a 2002 Survey by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, volunteerism among retired people is increasing: for people aged 75 and older, 43 percent reported that they volunteer for an average of 3.1 hours per week. The total number of volunteers in this age category is 7.1 million for a total amount of annual volunteer time of 1.1 billion hours. An additional 21 percent of older Americans surveyed said they would commit at least five hours a week to volunteering if they were to receive a small incentive for their time such as prescription drug discounts or a small stipend.²⁷

In 2003, the American Association of Retired Persons determined that forty-five percent of pre-retirees planned to work until they were 70 or older. Of the group, 27 percent had decided to work into their 70s and 18 percent estimated they would work until they were 80 or older or for as long as they could. The reasons given for their desire to continue working were to stay mentally active (87 percent); to stay physically active (85 percent); to remain productive or useful (77 percent); and to generate income (54 percent).²⁸

²⁷ Peter D. Hart Research Associates, “The New Face of Retirement: An Ongoing Survey of American Attitudes on Aging,” (San Francisco: Civic Ventures, 2002). http://www.encore.org/files/2002_survey_analysis.pdf (accessed November 11, 2011).

²⁸ S. Kathi Brown, “Staying Ahead of the Curve 2003: The AARP Working in Retirement Study,” (Washington, DC: AARP, 2003). http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/econ/multiwork_2003_1.pdf (accessed November 11, 2011).

Against such optimistic predictions, Dr. David J Powell presents the current realities of aging in an article entitled “Respecting Aging” concerning persons in their seventies. Dr. Powell’s study reveals,

Dr. Powell’s study reveals:

1. Ten percent of men in their seventies work full-time while only 10 percent work part-time.
2. Five percent of women in their seventies work full-time while only 10 percent work part-time.
3. Twenty-two to twenty-three percent of men and women in their seventies have four or more major chronic health conditions. Twenty-four to twenty-five percent have three major chronic health problems.
4. Within this age group, 18 percent of the women have cancer while 23 percent of the men have cancer.
5. High blood pressure is dominant among this age group. Sixty-five percent of the men and sixty-seven percent of the women have high blood pressure.
6. Fifteen percent of the women have depression while only 10 percent of the men have depression.
7. Arthritis afflicts 26 percent of the women and 63 percent of the men in this age group.
8. Mild to severe cognitive impairment is reported among 26 percent of both men and women in this age group.²⁹

Although Americans celebrate the unique and amazing lives of noteworthy individuals who age well, such celebration and expectation about ‘successful’ aging leaves individuals who live with illness and disease feeling atypical and isolated in their own situations of fragility. Because of the culture’s obsessive attention to health and longevity, Americans believe they can control wellness by their own will power and positive thinking. Powell, in “Respecting Aging,” notes,

²⁹ David J. Powell, “Respecting Aging.”
<http://www.gbod.org/site/apps/nlnet/content.aspx?c=nhLRJ2PMKsG&b=7731293&ct=11219863¬oc=1>
 (accessed November 11, 2011).

Elders are living contemplative lives, seeking the inner journey of strength, prayer, reflection, meditation. Instead of pressuring older people to remain successful, active, compete in sports with younger athletes and continue to 'be doing,' perhaps we ought to encourage people to learn how to 'be'. Aging gives us that time to be. But, in our society that's stigmatized.³⁰

Based on Powell's conclusions, this raises the question: how do we encourage and support fragile seniors to simply 'be' rather than 'do'?

In a culture that emphasizes human value and significance by what we do rather than whom and whose we are, learning simply to be the unique human beings that God has created us to be is at the very core of our understanding of faith. If we truly understand that we are created in God's image to glorify and worship God, then what we do as God's children needs always to begin with the grace that God bestows upon us because we are simply and completely loved and cherished by God.

Faith in God is not about what we do for God but about what God does and continues to do for us. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."³¹ If we really understand what Romans 8:39b tells us then nothing in all of creation can ever separate us from God's love and care and concern for us in and through Christ Jesus our Lord. Supporting fragile seniors in their discovery of how to nourish a fruitful faith becomes the challenge for people giving care and pastoral support.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Romans 8:16-17 The Open Bible, Expanded Edition of The New King James Version of the New Testament (TOBEENKJVNT).

What is faith? Webster's new world dictionary defines faith as "an unquestioning belief that does not require proof or evidence or an unquestioning belief in God, religious tenets or a system of religious beliefs."³² However, faith seems to be a personal experience and has meaning to individuals on a personal level.

Scripture stresses the importance of fruitful faith in older age. From Psalm 92:14, "They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green."³³ In his ministry, Peter provides a guide for how believers are to live fruitful lives of faith in Jesus Christ through participation in the community of faith, which adds to one's knowledge of God.³⁴ Paul's travels in Asia Minor were an effort to show people it is "in God that we live and move and have our being,"³⁵ and we exist to glorify and serve God.³⁶ In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul describes five ways that faith offers comfort in 2 Corinthians 4 and 5 that Christians can endure and be fruitful when facing life's difficulties and challenges. The ways of comfort he recommends include: (1) a focus upon the unseen spiritual gifts that God gives;³⁷ (2) by having the assurance and certainty of knowing without having the answers;³⁸ (3) by groaning while waiting;³⁹ (4) by

³² *Webster's New World Dictionary of American English, Third College Edition*, ed. Victoria Neufeldt (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1988), 487.

³³ Ps. 92:14 New International Version (NIV).

³⁴ 2 Pet. 1:3-8 (NIV).

³⁵ Acts 17:28 (NIV).

³⁶ "Westminster Shorter Catechism," (1647), in *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Part I, The Book of Confessions*, 7.001 (Louisville, KY: The Office of the General Assembly, 2007), 175.

³⁷ 2 Cor. 4:18 (NIV).

³⁸ 2 Cor. 5:1 (NIV).

³⁹ 2 Cor. 5:4 (NIV).

believing without seeing;⁴⁰ and (5) by actually preferring the ‘then’ to the “now” as described by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:9.⁴¹

Definitions abound in literature to define faith. Hebrews 11:1-3, as translated by Eugene Peterson, offers the best expression of how faith is understood in the context of this ministry research project:

The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It’s our handle on what we can’t see; the act of life worth living. The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd. By faith, we see the world called into existence by God’s word, what we see created by what we don’t see.⁴²

A fruitful faith reaches beyond the Hebrews definition, speaking to a vitality and energy that is not based upon the actions or activities of an individual but is faith which possesses a conviction or assurance of God’s presence and abiding love regardless of one’s abilities to perform or engage in ‘doing activities.’ The apostle Paul offers a useful description of such fruitful faith in Romans 8:29-31:

With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn’t hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn’t gladly and freely do for us? Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ’s love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture...None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I’m absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—

⁴⁰ 2 Cor. 5:7 (NIV).

⁴¹ R. Geoffrey Brown, “A Theologian’s Perspective,” in *Aging, Death and the Quest for Immortality*, eds. C. Ben Mitchell, Robert D. Orr, and Susan A. Salladay (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 26.

⁴² Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The New Testament in Contemporary English* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1993), 471.

absolutely *nothing* can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.⁴³

Vernon Grounds, in his essay entitled "A Personal Perspective," concludes that to meet the aging process with the virtues of courage, confidence, cheerfulness, and energy, a vital faith, which offers sustaining resources is needed. Faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ offers four important outcomes to an aging person. First, faith gives the comfort of an abiding presence as noted in Deuteronomy 31:6-8, Matthew 28:20, and Hebrews 13:5. Second, a vital faith in Jesus Christ offers confidence in faith that transcends doctrinal premises to become emotionally and personally meaningful as the Psalmist underscores in Psalms 139. Third, a vital faith provides an awareness of one's unchanging self-worth that cannot be diminished through the ravages of aging. This assurance rests upon Christians' foundational understanding that God creates each person in the image of God.

Faith plays a role in how seniors understand their identity and what they believe about themselves. When older adults can affirm that they are significant and have meaning in God's eyes because of God's love and grace, they are more able to be confident that they matter and are valuable as God's beloved children. Scriptural promises, as referenced in the Gospel of Matthew 6:26-30, Matthew 10:29-31, and Matthew 16:26, help to underscore this awareness. Finally, a vital faith offers opportunities for aging people to regard themselves as having continued significance and usefulness in God's Kingdom as underscored by Psalm 92:14, Psalm 71, and Luke 2:36-37.⁴⁴

⁴³ Rom. 8:29-31 The Message: The New Testament in Contemporary English (TMNTCE).

⁴⁴ Vernon Grounds, "A Personal Perspective," in *Aging, Death and the Quest for Immortality*, eds. C. Ben Mitchell, Robert D. Orr and Susan Salladay (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 6-7.

It would be utterly simplistic to assert that all one needs to is to have ‘faith’ and all the desires to ‘do’ will magically be overcome. However, it is possible for all Christians to become more aware and cognizant of God’s desire that people learn to ‘be still and know that I AM God.’⁴⁵ Beginning a practice of becoming more aware of God’s presence and desire to be in relationship with God is a major step towards recognizing the unique gifts that God has created within each person. Being still and listening, being still and talking aloud to God, being still and acknowledging God’s action in the world may be new ways for fragile individuals to begin the journey of discovering God’s presence with them.

Review of Spiritual Assessment Instruments

There are more studies underway to support spiritual and religious well-being of healthy, fragile, and dying people with new spiritual need assessment tools being developed. In previous research,⁴⁶ Rev. Osborne utilized three specific spiritual assessment instruments. The first is one most doctors are taught during their training is known by the acronym “FICA” because it reminds individuals taking a patient’s spiritual history of the questions to be asked: “F = Faith or Beliefs; I = Importance and influence; C = Community; and A = Address (or referrals to be made).⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ps. 46:10 The New Revised Standard Version of the New Testament (NRSVNT).

⁴⁶ Ann Osborne and Paul Derrickson, “Identifying Spiritual Needs in Patients Presenting with Chest Pain When Catheterization Reveals No Clinical Etiologies,” *Chaplaincy Today : The Journal of the Association of Professional Chaplains* 23, no.2 (Autumn/Winter, 2003): 10.

⁴⁷ Puchalski, Christina, MD. 2006. FICA Spiritual Assessment Tool. Lecture. Penn State Hershey Medical Center, Feb. 25, 2006.

The second spiritual assessment instrument, developed by Kathleen Dowling Singh, is entitled, “Taking a Spiritual Inventory.” It assists individuals to examine their spiritual lives as they move closer to dying. This inventory design contains seventeen open-ended questions for people to answer who are nearing death.⁴⁸

Rev. Osborne developed the third spiritual assessment tool reviewed in a previous research project. During a chaplaincy residency program, she engaged in clinical-based research at Penn State Hershey Medical Center to assess the spiritual needs of individuals “Living with a Wounded/Broken Heart.” This instrument identified eight spiritual need areas among people who thought they were having a heart attack but were found to have no clinical etiologies.⁴⁹

Each assessment is used in a specific context for a specific health-based purpose. FICA is used for a general population who has been admitted into a hospital setting. Kathryn Singh’s assessment is used for people who are nearing death. Rev. Osborne’s “Living with a Broken Heart” instrument was specifically designed to assess the needs of people who thought they had a heart attack but showed no medical evidence of such following heart catheterization.

In preparation for the United Theological Seminary’s Ministry Project research, Rev. Osborne reviewed the three assessment instruments for their usefulness and applicability for the current study. She determined that none of the three were suitable to serve as a pre-test and post-test to assess fragile individuals’ level of religious faith or to identify the specific spiritual needs that they need or want in order to live their lives fully.

⁴⁸ Singh, Kathleen Dowling, Ph.D. 2006. *Grace in Dying: How We are Transformed Spiritually as We Die*. Lecture. Penn State Hershey Medical Center, Feb. 25, 2006.

⁴⁹ Osborne and Derrickson, “Identifying Spiritual Needs in Patients”, 10.

Through a comprehensive literature review of spiritual need assessments, the researcher determined that two instruments would best suit the requirements of the Ministry Project. *The Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire* tests the participants' affinity with ten statements about how they practice or experience religious faith.⁵⁰ The second instrument identified is the *Spiritual Needs Inventory* developed by Carla P. Hermann, Ph.D. in her research entitled, "The Degree to Which Spiritual Needs of Patients Near the End of Life Are Met."⁵¹ Copies of the two instruments are found in Appendix A, entitled Surveys on page 119.

The researcher hopes that the findings may suggest practical ways to assist fragile seniors to: (1) remain fruitful and fulfilled as Christian disciples; (2) claim lives of significance and meaning; and (3) trust and be confident in God's providence and care as they walk through the limitations of the aging process. The desire is that the findings might suggest a new model for enhancing fruitfulness in faith by changing the emphasis from 'doing' to 'being'.

⁵⁰ T.G. Plante and M. Boccaccini, "The Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire," *Pastoral Psychology* 45, (1997): 375-387.

⁵¹ Carla P. Hermann, "The Degree to Which Spiritual Needs of Patients Near the End of Life Are Met," *R.N. Oncology Nursing Forum* 34, no.1 (2007): 70.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter Three provides the theoretical basis for this Model in Ministry Project. It establishes the case as to why the researcher believes this Model in Ministry is relevant and needed at this time in the life of the larger church. This chapter discusses how biblical, historical, and theological understandings support and undergird the Ministry Research Project.

Biblical Foundation

This project is based upon the researcher's continuing observation that long-term faithful Christians, who are in their fragile aging years, report they experience significant crises of faith. As they age, many question and lose hope concerning whether all they learned about the Christian faith can really be trusted and relied upon as they face the dying process. One outcome of the project is to develop a collection of resources to assist fragile aging elders to: (1) remain fruitful and fulfilled as Christian disciples; (2) claim lives of significance and meaning; and (3) trust and be confident in God's providence and care as they walk through the limitations of the aging process.

The primary scripture passage undergirding the focus of this Ministry Research Project is 2 Peter 1:3-11. This pericope presents a methodology for assuring fruitful Christian discipleship. Historically, it is believed the author's message was to reassure

second generation Christians who are in despair and experiencing hopelessness in their faith experience. False teachers scoff at apostolic teachings that the parousia of Christ and God's judgment of the world is real. Challenging Christians to remain confident in faith and trust in God's providence, the author reminds his audience of God's timing and care as they walk through the chaos of the historical and political events engulfing their lives.¹

Christians are to live out faith by engaging in such a close connection with Jesus to become participants of the divine nature. The knowledge of Jesus is relational. This knowledge comes as personal experience, unique and specific to the individual's personal life journey. Relational knowing is entirely dependent upon how God embraces each one based upon his or her unique faith journey. Knowing of the Triune God is central to conversion while also being a consequence of conversion. This knowledge strongly forms and undergirds one's discipleship to enable understanding of God's will for one's life. The person desires to live out all of God's commands, placing special emphasis upon the love of God. God's grace and love are the motivations and only instigators of the faith process and activity of salvation. God acts to redeem and establish our ability to be in relationship. It is grace alone and nothing that we ourselves can do to accomplish our salvation. No engagement in any 'method' or practice towards perfection or accomplishing a specific activity or fulfilling a particular spiritual accomplishment will ever result in our being saved. Thus, it is by grace alone that we receive salvation.

Humanity is related to and adopted as God's beloved children and heirs because of the power of the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is only through the leading,

¹ Duane F. Watson, "The Second Letter of Peter," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 12 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 325-26.

guidance, and empowerment of the Holy Spirit acting as God's gracious presence that humans come to hunger and thirst to know God and to seek a relationship with Jesus, the Christ. The reformers, Luther and Calvin, affirmed that in all of life we belong to God. God's purpose in creating us is so God may delight in us and that we may glorify and worship God.

Such faith and knowledge challenges reformed Christians to strive for the gracious gifts of God or virtues, which have been endowed to them by grace through their relationship with the Triune God. Goodness is an inner desire within the disciple to commitment one's entire life to moral excellence. God entrusts Christians, as a part of being who they are called to be as God's own children, to live a life engaging in the highest standards of excellence practicing truthfulness, ethical actions, and moral conduct.

Disciples are to open themselves up to God's provision of spiritual knowledge. This spiritual knowledge comprises all of the information and connected relationship that Christians have with Jesus. This relationship is acquired gradually throughout one's entire life journey as a called and specially gifted human being walking in relationship with God. Knowledge grows as one walks with Christ, growing daily as disciples mature in relating to the Triune God.

Self-control is being able to live a life free from obsessive or compulsive behaviors, trusting in God to provide for all of one's needs. Disciples are freed completely from the compulsions of 'doing' and the need to control. God's grace frees fruitful disciples from addictions such as the desire for wealth, power, control, or physical obsessions such as food, alcohol, drugs, gambling, sex, shopping, or anything done that is

totally out of one's own control. Living becomes a way to be in God's presence, trusting in God's providence and sovereignty. As one lives and matures in discipleship with God, self-control along with trust in God's power and control permeates one's entire being.

Endurance or perseverance is the gift that God gives as one matures in trust and reliance upon God's action. God's action encourages God's own children to be immersed in the awareness and ability to think in right, honest, and just ways. One lives out righteousness (living in a right manner) by being faithful to God despite temptation, suffering, or evil. To be enduring as God's beloved children means disciples trust in God and the fulfillment of God's promises. The virtue of godliness is the ability to be honoring of all God gives to God's children. Disciples acknowledge God's authority and obey God's will by making right choices that please and honor God.

Mutual affection (Φιλადέλφεια or Philadelphia) literally means brotherly/sisterly kindness. Christians are to be present with all people that God brings into the daily moments of life. They are to be in every encounter holding such a relationship of gracious affection to honor and respect each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. Disciples are to love extravagantly and without limits. Such love develops as humans abide in constant community and relationship with Triune God. Disciples experience God's loving and gracious relationship and in turn model this love to the individuals that God brings into their lives each day.

The seven virtues of being-ness as described in 2 Peter 1:3-11 enable older adults to be fruitful and to live flourishing and meaningful lives of wholeness. People who bear fruit live rich abundant lives of faith. They are able to understand and perceive God's truth, separate and apart from the truth, that culture often tries to transmit. As disciples

who live fruitfully, all Christians, regardless of their ages, are called by God to change their attitudes about living to ‘be’ witnesses to God’s grace and love and to live as God intends Christ’s body—the church—to live. All disciples are to respond to God’s unique call for each person to serve God in accomplishing His purposes. In relationship with God, Christians enter into the realm of God’s activity, participating in the blessings that He intends for each person as human beings not human doings.

Much scholarly debate exists about who wrote 2 Peter, where the book originated, and when it was written. The current majority opinion is that an unknown person wrote the book pseudonymously under the name of the apostle Peter. Most scholars agree that the writer is a highly educated, Hellenized Jewish Christian. The author is very skilled in the use of Hellenistic terminology as well as Greco-Roman and Asiatic rhetoric, and he possesses an excellent familiarity with the Greek language. The writer is also extremely knowledgeable about Greek, Jewish, and the developing Christian traditions along with an extensive knowledge of the Old Testament.²

The author is aware of living in a post-apostolic time and addresses the audience from that perspective. The purpose of the letter is to defend the Early Church’s normative apostolic doctrines about the Christian life and how to be faithful while awaiting the arrival of the parousia. False teachers, possibly affected by Epicurean and Antinomian teaching, have arrived in the churches preaching: (1) God is transcendent and

² Jerome H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude* (New York: Doubleday, 1993): 128-42; quoted by Duane F. Watson, “The Second Letter of Peter,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 12 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 324.

unknowable; (2) God is not provident and does not work in the world through a divine plan; (3) there is no afterlife; and (4) there is no divine judgment—either past or future.³

Dating the text is uncertain with scholars theorizing an early date of 60 CE (assuming apostolic authorship) to mid-second century (if pseudonymous). R.J. Bauckham postulates that because the early church expected the parousia to happen during the lifetime of the apostles, and it was their death which generated the crisis of faith in belief in the apostolic doctrines, the author must be writing to the second generation of Christians. If one assumes first generation Christians were born about 10 CE, and lived about seventy years, the earliest possible date of authorship would be 80-90 CE.⁴

There is a similarity between the needs and questions of modern disciples with the concerns of Christians about whom the original author of 2 Peter wrote. The culture's emphasis and focus upon remaining healthy, productive, and young downplays and often contradicts the Christian belief in the parousia and God's eternal reign with God's people in abundant, joyful, and fruitful new life in Christ. The apostle Paul urged Christians to care for their bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit; however, he never suggested that Christians were to so worship the body and youthfulness that they denied the realities of death and entering eternal life to live with God.

³ Jerome H. Neyrey, "The Form and Background of the Polemic in 2 Peter," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99, no.3 (September 1980): 407-431; quoted by Duane F. Watson, "The Second Letter of Peter," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 12 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 326.

⁴ Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter: Word Bible Commentary*, Vol. 50 (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1983), 158-162.

Literary Form

The second book of Peter as a whole represents a combination of two literary genres: a letter and a farewell speech or testament. In the last words of a testament, a dying person of renown announces one's own death and rehearses ethical lessons and traditions which are hoped to continue forward beyond the writer's death. The first two verses of the chapter act as the introduction to the letter. Verses 3 through 11 comprise a mini-homily or exordium, which establishes a relationship between the writer and the audience and describes the purpose of the letter. The exordium represents the standard rhetorical and homiletic pattern common to both Jewish and early Christian literature.⁵

The opening historical and theological section of verses 3 and 4 underscore the saving acts of God throughout history. The ethical exhortations of verses 5 through 10 anticipate what is to come in the reign of God. The final eschatological portion promises salvation and threatens judgment in verse 11. This ethical and eschatological teaching establishes a theological and ethical standard by which believers are able to measure the doctrine and practices of true Christian disciples and the falsehoods of false doctrine.⁶

Social Context

The social context of the intended audience is communal and relational. The letter is written to churches in Asia Minor, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia to emphasize the responsibility and expectations that they have in helping all members

⁵ Duane F. Watson, "The Second Letter of Peter," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, Vol.12 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 335.

⁶ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 173-175.

mature as Christians by nurturing and guiding them in the gracious love of God. All members are challenged to “confirm their call and election”⁷ or to “make your calling and election sure.”⁸ Christ gathers believers together bidding them “to repent, be saved, to serve God in accomplishing God’s purposes and to enter into the kingdom and partake of its blessings.”⁹

The letter is intended to respond to false teachers who had convinced some newer or more spiritually immature Christians to adopt alternative doctrines than those given by the apostles. Justifying a moral libertinism, the teachers claimed the parousia or Second Coming of Christ was a myth, so that no final judgment by God would occur. The false teachers encouraged Christians to renew participation in businesses and social clubs held in temples that involved worship of pagan gods, idolatry, and sexual immorality.¹⁰

Theological Challenge

The theological emphasis of 2 Peter 1:3-11 is upon the Lordship of Christ. Both Lord and Savior, Jesus is given all authority to rule all of creation and as Savior, Jesus is the Master of all who have been redeemed. Through Christ’s gift of salvation, all Christians are gifted with everything they need to live a moral life grounded in righteousness to respond to Christ’s call and election. One’s moral life includes nurturing the virtues described in verses 5-7 and to love God with all of one’s being and to love others as one loves themselves. The great commandment of Jesus is at its very core a

⁷ 2 Pet.1:10 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

⁸ 2 Pet. 1:10 New International Version (NIV).

⁹ Watson, Second Letter, 337.

¹⁰ Ibid., 325.

command to relate, nurture, and care for others in the same way one cares for oneself. Always alert, Christians are challenged to expect the parousia to arrive “like a thief”.¹¹

Theological Foundation

This section discusses major theological themes, which undergird the Ministry Research Project in relation to understanding how the very fragile and most aged members of a reformed congregation integrate their faith in God with the limitations they encounter during the aging and dying processes. The Doctrine of the Trinity affirms the relational and communal nature of the Triune God. “Therefore, whenever the name of God is mentioned without particularization, there are designated no less the Son and the Spirit than the Father; . . . In this way, unity of essence is retained and a reasoned order is kept, which yet takes nothing away from the deity of the Son and the Spirit.”¹²

God created people to live in relationship with one another and to worship in community as the Body of Christ. When people are alone and homebound because of illness, fragility, and aging they become isolated and experience loneliness, lack of community and discontinuity in relationships and companionship. Fragile individuals experience a sense of despair and hopelessness caused from their solitude and being without connections to others. Hauerwas and Yordy write,

Many dominant images in American culture portray old people as set in their ways, as not capable of learning anything significant, much less growing in virtue. The elderly are thus thought capable of engaging in superficial friendships with other old people through time-filling activities rather than in profound friendships of character. Old people are portrayed as simpler creatures than

¹¹ Ibid., 330.

¹² John T. McNeil, ed., *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 144.

younger adults; an old person typically is either ‘sweet or ‘irascible’ neither of which images indicates the interesting and complicated character of close friends. It is as though there is little reason to get to know old people because they are not very compelling as persons. Yet what could be more important than friendship between the old and the not so old, for otherwise how will the young ever know how to grow old and die?¹³

John Calvin defines faith as “a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.”¹⁴ Faith exists when “we do not regard the promises of mercy that God offers as true only outside ourselves, But not at all in us; rather that we make them ours by inwardly embracing them. . . . Now it is an assurance that renders the conscience calm and peaceful before God’s judgment.”¹⁵ When fragile older adults possess such a faith, they can live in peace assured of a life filled with God’s joy, grace, and abundance.

Vernon Grounds observes that a vital faith in Jesus Christ offers four clear benefits to people in their last quarter of life. First, individuals have the comfort of an abiding divine presence. To illustrate this certainty, a daughter placed an empty chair beside the bedside of her lonely and fragile father. Reminding him of his belief that Jesus promised to be with those who trust in him always, she suggested that he imagine Jesus sitting beside him in the chair so that he could talk with Jesus day or night. He was

¹³ Stanley Hauerwas and Lauren Yordy, “Captured in Time: Friendship and Aging,” in *Growing Old in Christ*, eds. Stanley Hauerwas, Carole Bailey Stoneking, Keith G. Meador, and David Cloutier (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 173-74.

¹⁴ McNeil, *Calvin*, 551.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 561.

encouraged to touch the chair as though he was touching Jesus. The truth of divine omnipresence became significant and meaningful to the man.¹⁶

Second, a vital faith enables aging people to be confident in their unchanging self-worth because they bear God's image. Jesus assured his followers that as children of God, bearing God's likeness, made in God's image, all people hold immeasurably more value and worth than sparrows¹⁷ or sheep.¹⁸ From God's viewpoint, humans have an undiminished value. "For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?"¹⁹ Such promises help remind aging and fragile individuals of their worth in God's eyes.

Third, vital faith in Christ brings opportunities for continued usefulness. Regardless of their limitations, through faith in Christ, fragile, aging people are able to respond by living fruitful, flourishing, and meaningful lives, while thriving in God's call and purposes. "They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green."^{20 21}

M. Therese Lysaught lists the fruits and gifts that are intrinsic to growing old:

Seeing one's grandchildren, having 'old' friends, celebrating decades of marriage, earning the honor that attends a lifelong career. Growing older provides the opportunity to truly master certain skills, to practice them effortlessly, and to share them with new generations of apprentices. The prospect of retirement,

¹⁶ Vernon Grounds, "A Personal Perspective," in *Aging, Death and the Quest for Immortality*, ed. C. Ben Mitchell, Robert D. Orr and Susan Salladay (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 6-7.

¹⁷ Matt.10:29 (NIV).

¹⁸ Matt. 12:12 (NIV).

¹⁹ Matt. 16:26 (NRSV).

²⁰ Ps. 92:14 (NIV).

²¹ Grounds, "A Personal Perspective," 13.

attractive to those whose financial security is assured, promises the leisure to shift one's energies to new pursuits and areas of interest.²²

Fourth, a vital faith in Christ gives all disciples the ministry of modeling.²³ Fragile seniors can serve as authentic and reliable disciples who bear witness and give testimony as examples being fruitful and abundant Christians. "The unwavering trust of an aged Christian proves the truthfulness of God's promise, 'Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you'^{24,25} Just as God did not leave the Israelites in Egypt or keep them wandering in the wilderness forever, even so the message of Jesus as the Good Shepherd reinforces the relational, caring, and nurturing nature of the Triune God for God's people.

William May identifies two virtues reserved specifically for older people. Simplicity enables aging individuals to travel light, to live by simple truths and simple gifts. As the prophet Micah notes in Micah 6:8, "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"²⁶ Because they are able to travel light, "the virtue of delight is

²² M. Therese Lysaught, "Memory, Funerals, and the Communion of Saints: Growing Old and Practices of Remembering," in *Growing Old in Christ*, eds. Stanley Hauerwas, Carole Bailey Stoneking, Keith G. Meador, and David Cloutier (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 270.

²³ Grounds, "A Personal Perspective," 13.

²⁴ Isa. 46:4 (NIV).

²⁵ Grounds, "A Personal Perspective," 13.

²⁶ Mic. 6:8 (NRSV).

a gift to and of the elderly because they are weighed down by fewer cares. It is partly due as well to the fact that they are nearing the end of their journey and so are released from having to notice and care about only the ‘significant things’.”²⁷

Charles Pinches observes that fragile adults discover the virtue of limitedness, becoming aware of the many things that limit their world, while gaining gratitude and appreciation for that which they are able to accomplish. This leads some to discover the virtue of empathy. Older adults, who are especially aware of their own limits, giftedness, and needs, are more able to recognize them in other people. Rather than complaining about their own concerns, they are able to more effortlessly express concern for and empathize with others who experience greater needs than their own.²⁸

Historical Foundation

In the essay entitled, “Special Gifts and Special Burdens,” Rowan Greer explores understandings of the early church fathers about aging. Because so few individuals attained a very old age, aging was a special circumstance rather than the rule. The early church fathers seem more concerned about how Scripture understood the average human lifespan.

²⁷ William F. May, *The Patient's Ordeal* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 134.

²⁸ Charles Pinches, “The Virtues of Aging,” in *Growing Old in Christ*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas, Carole Bailey Stoneking, Keith G. Meador, and David Cloutier (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 212.

Early Church Perspective

Early Christian writers viewed aging to possess the gifts of wisdom and virtue tempered with the challenges of physical and mental disability and vices peculiar to the aging people.²⁹ Ambrose spoke of ‘the honor of old age’³⁰ observing:

Let us speak of the duties that must be observed from our youth, so that they may grow along with our age. It is the nature of good youths to fear God, to be subject to parents, to honor older persons, to preserve chastity, not to despise humility, and to love clemency and modesty. All of these are ornaments of our younger years. For as older persons are characterized by seriousness and young people by enthusiasm, so also nature entrusts the gifts of modesty to youths.³¹

Greer notes that the early church writers understood a virtue of old age to be continence or the ability of an older person to overcome lust and sexual passion. John Cassian thought that a virtue of old age was humility or one’s ability to overcome pride and vain-glory. Ambrose believed that witness, guidance, and counsel are benefits that the old can give to the young. Many of the early church fathers placed great authority upon the older members of the church for teaching and disciplining young converts and church officers and priests.³² Jerome, one of the Church’s earliest theologians, wrote:

²⁹ Rowan A. Greer, “Special Gift and Special Burden,” in *Growing Old in Christ*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas, Carole Bailey Stoneking, Keith G. Meador, and David Cloutier (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 19-25.

³⁰ Ambrose, “On Belief in the Resurrection,” in *Ambrose: Select Works and Letters* 2.124 (Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers. second series Vol. 10, 1886-1890), quoted by Rowan A. Greer, “Special Gift and Special Burden,” in *Growing Old in Christ*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas, Carole Bailey Stoneking, Keith G. Meador, and David Cloutier (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 26.

³¹ Ambrose, “On the Duties of the Clergy,” in *Ambrose: Select Works and Letters* 1.17.65 (Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers. second series Vol. 10, 1886-1890), in *Inheriting Wisdom: Readings for Today from Ancient Christian Writers*, trans. Everett Ferguson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 15-16.

³² Greer, “Special Gift,” 27-30.

Nearly everything that is excellent about the body changes with age, and while wisdom alone increases, other things decline...those who were taught honorable pursuits during their youth and who meditate on the law of the Lord day and night become more learned with age, more experienced with practice, wiser with the passage of time, and in old age reap the sweetest fruits from past pursuits.³³

Medieval Perspective

In the thirteenth century, Roger Bacon, Franciscan monk and medical doctor, emphasized that the decline into old age and even death itself could be delayed. He recommended a lifestyle of discipline, healthy diet, and medicines to be adopted to overcome the hidden forces of nature causing aging. Bacon offered ways to prevent the signs of aging including gray hair, wrinkles, loss of sight, garrulity, anxiety, and weakness of body and mind. He was also interested in preventing the development of disorders including loss of imagination, memory, and reason. His age deterrent process involved cleanness, a nutritious diet involving the careful feeding of the animals of which humans were to consume, and careful management of medicines, vomiting, laxatives and purification of the blood.³⁴

Modern Perspective

Of special interest to this researcher are the stories told of the legendary four great charismatic leaders of the eastern European Hasidic movement in the eighteenth and

³³ Jerome, "Letters, 52.3," in *Inheriting Wisdom: Readings for Today from Ancient Christian Writers*, trans. Everett Ferguson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 16.

³⁴ Roger Bacon, *De Retardatione Accidentum Senectutis*, Vol. 14, ed. A.G. Little and E. Withington (Oxford: British Society of Franciscan Studies, 1928). Quoted by David Aers, "The Christian Practice of Growing Old in the Middle Ages," in *Growing Old in Christ*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas, Carole Bailey Stoneking, Keith G. Meador and David Cloutier (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 48-49.

nineteenth centuries. The stories recount the lives of Rebbe Pinhas of Koretz, Rebbe Barukh of Medzebozh, the Holy Seer of Lublin, and Rebbe Naphtali of Ropshitz. For all of their zeal, inspiration, holiness, and charismatic leadership, each one struggles with melancholy, despair, and a sense of anomie and disconnection with God in whom they place their trust and their life calling.

All four masters develop seemingly overly aggressive, almost obsessive methods to overcome the morose feelings they have. They fight sorrow with exuberance. They defeat despair with prayer. They meet resignation head on by igniting a brighter light of hope and deeper, more exalted understanding of their faith in God and in God's creation. Each master conceives new ways to experience happiness and joy so as not to give in to depression and unhappiness. The Hasidic leaders tell stories and hold communal celebrations to escape the temptations of silence and isolation.³⁵ Perhaps these legends hold nuggets of truth for the fragile older adults who also seek to remain fruitful and flourishing in the understanding and faith in the Triune God.

As seniors encounter the normal transitional process in moving from being highly active and productive in the external world to the more limited realm of fragility and more isolation, many engage in similar reactions and behaviors. How the Hasidic leaders engage with their own aging processes normalizes the aging experience for today's fragile people who experience similar behaviors.

Older adults are called by God to be flourishing and fruitful, living as God's beloved children who are loved, not for what they 'do' for God but because of who they are as God's unique and specially called disciples. They are to live in community with

³⁵ Ann M. Osborne, summary of *Four Hasidic Masters and Their Struggle Against Melancholy*, by Elie Wiesel (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978).

other people in relationship by sharing the truth and experiences of their lives. As disciples who live fruitfully, individuals may need to change certain aspects of their lives to live into God's best intentions. Seniors are to love and serve God by worshipping and glorifying God. To be fruitful, aging seniors are invited to adopt the virtues of being in relationship with God as well as the many gifts of God's grace.

When the aging process becomes overwhelming, when the despair and sense of meaninglessness threatens to engulf all sense of hope, it is then that Jesus, the kind and good shepherd reaches out to grasp them and hold on to them (even if they are too weak to hold on to him). Jesus grabs them, enfolds them in his arms of loving care and nurture, and brings them into the fold of God's gracious and amazing love! Through Jesus' sustaining nurture and love, the weak and fragile will joyfully enter into the realm of God's activity and relational community. God's grace, light, love, energy, and nurture will surround them to rekindle hope, reawaken confidence, and reassure them of God's presence and activity in all the experiences of their lives.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Chapter Four details the methodology and outlines the design of the research method used in the field study. A brief description of how the research model evolved is provided. The researcher describes the nature and progress of the six-month field experience, identifying the challenges and opportunities in the field-testing process.

The purpose of this Ministry Project is to understand how the more aged and fragile attendees of a large Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation integrate faith in God with limitations of aging and a more fragile quality of life. The researcher's hope is that participants might be able to move to a more transformed sense of their own significance—not for what they do, but for who they are—because of recalling, reflecting upon, and sharing their faith journey with an interested listener.

The research design for the ministry model uses a combination of descriptive qualitative survey instruments and case studies. The project requires the researcher to identify a pool of participants based on the criteria of being home bound and/or classified as fragile elders. Having identified the participants, the researcher will visit with each to listen to their respective narrative responses to predetermined questions. An additional responsibility of the researcher is to reflect back to the participants what the researcher heard from the participant. During the interview process, each participant will be asked to recall, reflect upon, and tell stories about how they experienced God's nearness or

closeness. It is the researcher's hypothesis that a noticeable change can be identified in the strength of religious faith through the ministry of presence, the process of recollection, the sharing of faith experience, and hearing one's own experience reflected back to them.

The researcher is optimistic that a recognizable change will occur in the participants' faith journeys. Perhaps through the interview process, they will discover a newfound sense of God's presence and desire for relationship. By recalling a time in the past when they experienced God's action in their lives and sharing that story with the researcher, it is hypothesized participants will discover renewed meaning and value as mattering to God.

The Ministry Model involves identifying and interviewing ten participants who are questioning their life status due to the aging process. Family members or caregivers helped the researcher to identify appropriate participants to include in the study. Participants also self-identified themselves as candidates because they experienced spiritual doubt, a significant level of faith crisis, or a significant challenge from the aging experience. Over a six-month field study period, participants would receive three personal visits from the researcher as the means to understand how each participant integrated his or her faith in God with their individual limitations.

The three project goals are: (1) to understand the importance faith plays in how participants currently live their lives; (2) to hear the stories about times when they felt close to or experienced God's nearness; and (3) to record the stories and present them as case narratives so that participants could hear and reflect upon past and present experiences. The researcher's goal is that the Ministry Model might enable participants

to realize a broader recognition of how each experiences God's presence in their lives.

The anticipation is the Ministry Model will encourage fragile aging individuals to share their life's faith journeys with God.

Each participant will complete pre and post surveys using the *Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire*¹ (found in Appendix A on page 120) to determine the level of religious strength each possesses as a method for validating how each individual values faith or spirituality in their present life situation. The participants will also complete the qualitative *Spiritual Needs Inventory*² (found in Appendix A on pages 121-123) to understand the importance they attach to seventeen specific practices of faith experience and whether these are currently being fulfilled in their lives. The researcher will follow the qualitative surveys with semi-structured personal interviews, summarizing the responses in written case studies to open-ended questions. In the second visit, the researcher will ask the following questions:

1. As you review your life experience, was there a time when you felt especially near or close to God?
2. Can you describe this experience?
3. What about now?
4. How would you describe your experience or sense of closeness to God?
5. Is there any advice you might give to people like Pastors or Caregivers for the ways you would like to receive spiritual support or care to help you stay fruitful in your faith?

¹ T.G. Plante and M. Boccaccini, "The Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire," *Pastoral Psychology* 45 (1997): 375-387.

² Carla Penrod Hermann, PhD, R.N., "The Degree to Which Spiritual Needs of Patients Near the End of Life are Met," *Oncology Nursing Forum* 34, no.1 (2007): 70.

After recording the participants' responses in individual case study narratives, the researcher will re-visit with each participant to engage them in a second feedback interview. The researcher will begin the feedback session by asking each participant to listen carefully to what the researcher heard and recorded. The researcher will preface the reading of the narrative by saying, "This is what I heard you say in response to the question." Following the reading of the response, the researcher will then ask the participant, "Did I hear what you wanted me to hear?" "Do you have anything to add or change?" The participant will be asked to respond by providing additional comments, making corrections, or affirming that the researcher heard them. Recording their responses to these questions, the researcher will gain additional information adding to the personal case study file. To conclude the testing, each participant will have the opportunity to respond in a post-test to the *Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire* for a second time. This will allow the researcher to determine if there has been any movement to a higher valuation on the strength of religious faith instrument.

Research Design of the Model

Realizing a significant number of congregants and aging seniors under the researcher's pastoral care were experiencing doubt in their faith journey that appeared to correlate to their aging process, the researcher began exploring how widespread it might be among the aging seniors in her ministry. One test subject, who initially self-identified a faith crisis, was a retired Presbyterian Minister of Word and Sacrament who had served a Presbyterian congregation for more than thirty years. Family members, caregivers,

Stephen Ministers, medical personnel, church staff, and care giving members of the church congregation, identified other possible research participants.

During the literature review process, the researcher discovered two existing survey instruments with the appropriate field-testing to assure that each possessed the reliability and validity criteria needed in a credible research project. The two survey instruments were the *Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire*³ and the *Spiritual Needs Inventory*.⁴ The researcher contacted the primary investigators related to each instrument to receive permission to utilize the instruments in the Ministry Model research process.

The researcher first determined what data analysis would be suitable to the methodologies utilized. It was determined that quantifiable numerical data would have to be collected through qualitative survey instruments. Thus, there was the need for an analytical process to develop qualitative field interviews, which would be associated with responsive case studies and feedback. To be as thorough and as scientific as possible, the researcher relied upon the use of qualitative information, summarizing the data by coding and grouping similar responses into emergent themes and similarity of recommendations.

A process for tabulating, coding, and evaluating numerical data would also need to be established in accordance with the appropriate statistical methods, which would require the support of a professional statistician. Hence, qualitative analytical analyses along with case studies were determined as the most appropriate tools for assessing the participants in this study.

³ Plante and M. Boccaccini, "The Santa Clara." 375-387.

⁴ Hermann, "The Degree", 70.

Each of the participants, living independently or in an assisted living facility, would be required to give written permission to the researcher to conduct the research. To participate in the study, individuals would have to participate in all aspects of the research (surveys, interviews, feedback visits, and post-testing). The participants had to meet one or more conditions of the researcher's fragility definition, but were alert, oriented, responsive, and willing to be interviewed for 20-30 minutes in three separate visits. Once this phase was completed, it was time to assess the participants.

Measurement

The measurement process for the Ministry Model is a hybrid approach employing qualitative and ethnographic research paradigms. The researcher developed the measurement procedures to meet the commonly articulated assumptions of the research community regarding both paradigms.⁵

The assessment procedure requires the researcher to visit each participant in the natural environment of their homes to interview each about their values and experiences of faith or spirituality. Acting as the primary instrument in the data collection process, the researcher is to listen to and observe the responses of each study participant as they respond to qualitative valuation instruments and open-ended research questions.

The data emerging from the study is designed to produce case study descriptions that highlight the individual faith experiences and circumstances of the ten study participants. Each person will respond in their own words while the researcher pays close attention through the active listening process and through practicing the ministry of

⁵ John W. Cresswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 195.

presence—sitting quietly and observing the physical, cognitive, and emotional responses of each person as they engage in the field study process.

The focus of the research process will be on hearing the responses, feelings, experiences, and perceptions of the ten participants. The methodology requires the researcher to carefully observe and grasp an understanding of the participants' reality as they encounter the fragile aging process. The researcher plans to recount in the participants' own words what she understood the individuals wanted the researcher to hear. This is the primary task of the field study process; so much so, that the researcher should couch the final interview with the words, "Is this what you wanted me to hear?" Because of the unique situation and experience of each individual studied, there may be multiple realities presented for the researcher to describe and understand. To best present this data, the researcher will compile individual case study responses, briefly describing the life circumstances of each individuals who participates in the field research. The case study responses are contained in Appendix B on pages 129-163.

Because the goal of qualitative research is to observe both processes as well as to document results, the researcher has designed the ministry model in order to understand the value to which participants' attach their faith or experience of the divine and the specific ways in which each practiced or experienced spirituality or faith. Two qualitative surveys are employed for this assessment. Close attention is given to the particular scores each participant reflects through the instruments. In addition, the researcher should carefully compare the common themes and ideas expressed through the open-ended interview responses.

The goal of the qualitative field model is to offer a method to understand and draw conclusions about the individuals' experiences of the reality of God's presence in their lives. Thus, rather than concrete, quantifiable elements found in quantitative methods, the results involve participants' intuitive and interior knowing and perceptions. Since the results will be unique to each participant, the researcher will not be able to quantify or duplicate the results in the scientific manner of quantifiable research. The validity measures for the study are based upon how participants conveyed believability through expressed experiences and perceptions, trustworthiness and objectivity.

In regard to ethical issues, United Theological Seminary's Human Subjects' Internal Review Board requirements, and in order to protect the rights, needs, values, and desires of the participants, the researcher will include the following safeguards in the methodology. The research goals are stated clearly at the initial visit and accompanied with a brief written description of the project methodology and time commitments. The participants will receive a written description of how the data will be used including a discussion of how the case studies will be handled using standard human subjects' research requirements, anonymity, confidentiality, and use of numerical case references rather than actual identities. Each participant will be asked to sign the form verifying his or her willingness to participate in the research project.

How the data is collected and used is explained to each participant in the initial visit prior to the signing of the permission slip. The individual case study reports and a summary of final research project conclusions will be made available to each study participant at their request. To gather the data in an appropriate procedure requires an

organized strategy that also correlates with the process of how and when the researcher has chosen to develop this study. The projected timeline for the Ministry Model Field Testing resembles the suggested schedule in table 1.4.

Table 1.4. Timeline for Ministry Model Field Testing

Time Frame	Targeted Assessment
September 2011	Complete literature review for ministry model;
October 2011	Develop research methods and ministry model for field testing;
January/ February 2012	Conduct personal interviews and develop verbatim case studies;
March 2012	Conduct case study review and feedback response visits;
April 2012	Conduct post-tests surveys and compile data;

Source: Information based on researcher's targeted deadlines.

The verification of measurements requires a researcher to employ methods that will assure reliability, validity, and generalization of conclusions. Establishing a uniform procedure in developing the case study responses is essential to assure reliability and consistency for reporting conclusions. The researcher will listen to the respondent at the initial meeting to gather relevant information pertaining to issues such as age, life experiences, education, years of marriage, and length of time since death of their spouse if applicable. Available demographic data extracted from the church membership database or obtained from the person who recommended the individual for participation in the study will also be included in the background section of the case study narratives.

Once the case study responses are developed, the researcher will proceed with the narratives by reading them back to the participants as a part of the third feedback

interview. The researcher will read the descriptive data to each of the participants as part of the feedback process. This enables the participant to correct any inaccuracies or misrepresentations.

Following the interview process and the recording of accurate narratives, the researcher will review the findings to determine common themes and ideas presented in answering the three open-ended questions. The researcher will code the numerical responses from each of the two surveys separately for each individual with the appropriate statistical tests applied. Data is collected through multiple sources including the two survey instruments, the three interviews, researcher observations, and analysis of the case study narrative themes and commonalities. The participants serve as an appropriate verification tool for the researcher's observations. In each interview, the researcher will relay the information developed back to the participant. The researcher will engage the participant at each stage in dialogue to verify and check the interpretations noted about the participant's sense of reality, perception, and meaning. Significant conclusions, the case study narratives, and a summary of research findings will be provided to participants to allow for member checking.

The researcher will employ the support of a peer examiner from the United Theological Seminary Peer Group of Spirituality and Aging to review and respond to the researcher's findings. The primary method for assuring external validity will be to offer a detailed narrative of the field experience process so that another researcher might employ a similar process for study and comparison.

Instrumentation

In 2001, Carla Penrod Hermann, Ph.D., R.N., conducted research with nineteen hospice patients, of which ten were women, and nine were men. The mean age of the group was 72 years. The average time spent in hospice care ranged from two weeks to twelve months. The qualitative study assessed the spiritual needs of dying patients. Using semi-structured interviews, data was coded. Twenty-nine unique spiritual needs were identified and grouped into six themes. These included: (1) the need for involvement and control; (2) the need for positive outlook; (3) the need to experience nature; (4) the need for religion; (5) the need to finish business; and (6) the need for companionship.⁶ Hermann concluded “that participants perceive spirituality as a broad concept that may or may not involve religion. Spiritual needs were likewise broad in scope and were linked closely to purpose and meaning in life.”⁷ In a second study, entitled “The Degree to Which Spiritual Needs of Patients Near the End of Life Are Met,”⁸ Hermann developed a *Spiritual Needs Inventory* which detailed seventeen separate spiritual needs and rated life satisfaction using the Cantril ladder and was used with patients near the end of life.

Although the participants in the Ministry Model field study are not near the end of life, but are experiencing fragility due to the spiritual, emotional, or physical challenges of the aging process, the researcher decided to utilize this instrument during the first interview session with participants. The researcher determined that this instrument is reliable, valid, and transferable in order to assess and understand how

⁶ Hermann, “Spiritual Needs,” 67.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Hermann, “The Degree,” 70.

fragile study participants may experience their own spiritual needs and level of life satisfaction.

The researcher contacted Dr. Hermann by email to request permission for the use of the instrument on November 11, 2011. Dr. Hermann replied, giving not only permission but provided the published journal articles and the *Spiritual Needs Inventory Instrument* to the researcher for use in this study. The *Spiritual Needs Inventory* offered an understanding of the specific ways that project participants assessed the many ways of experiencing spiritual nurture and their levels of spiritual need.

Following a comprehensive review of spiritual need inventories, the researcher determined that the *Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire*⁹ would be a suitable instrument to assess the value that each study participant had for religious faith in their own lives. The researcher decided to employ this Questionnaire as a pre-test to assess the participants' overall strength of religious faith. Following the three-phased interview process, each participant will complete the same Questionnaire as a post-test to assess any change in the valuation of religious faith. The researcher hopes that the total score would move from a low faith range (10) to a higher faith range (40) as an outcome of using the ministry model with each participant.

The Project Model in Ministry offers a methodology to assess and understand the ways that ten individuals experience their sense of nearness or closeness to God as they walk through the fragile times of the aging process. The findings may offer a summary of common themes as well as a set of recommendations for how to assist individuals to stay fruitful in their faith as they experience the fragile times of their lives.

⁹ Plante and Boccaccini, "The Santa Clara," 375-387.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

This chapter offers a discussion of the actual experience of the researcher during the implementation of the field research. The researcher details the data collection methods utilized and provides the analysis objectives driving the research. In addition, the reader learns the challenges and opportunities resulting through the data collection process while also learning the results of the field research.

Data collection involved four discrete types of data. The four data types include: (1) data related to the ministry context—such as the total number of congregants aged fifty and older; (2) data related to the potential participant pool available for field research; (3) data related to actual participants' participation; and (4) data related to implementation of the Ministry Model. The data collection process began October 1, 2011 and was completed on April 4, 2012.

Data, Participants, and Implementation

On October 1, 2011, the researcher determined the number of congregational participants who participated in worship as identified by congregational role information and the attendance records completed during each worship service. This information is

contained in the All Church Systems database as described in Chapter One.¹ From this data, a report was generated detailing by age category the names, addresses, and birth dates of each member of the congregation.

Because of her familiarity with the life and faith circumstances of the more fragile attendees and homebound members of the congregation, on October 10, 2011, the researcher identified an initial pool of thirty potential individuals whose needs corresponded with the questions to be answered through the field research. The researcher developed a paragraph that briefly summarized the purpose of field research, described the research methodology and developed an initial “Consent for Research Document” based upon a similar consent form which she had used in another human subjects research project.² After developing an initial priority list of ten potential participants from the identified pool of thirty people, the researcher scheduled and completed initial contact visits with the identified prospects between October 11 and October 31, 2011.

During the course of each visit, the researcher described her research topic, the reasons for her interest in the research question and the research methodology. She asked the individuals if they might have a desire to participate in the field research. The researcher asked the person to pray and discern whether they felt physically up to participating in three discrete study visits. In each visit, the researcher indicated that she

¹ Highland Presbyterian Church Membership List by Age. All Church Systems Database Management System. (accessed October 1, 2011).

² Ann Osborne and Paul Derrickson, “Identifying Spiritual Needs in Patients Presenting with Chest Pain When Catheterization Reveals No Clinical Etiologies,” *Chaplaincy Today, The Journal of the Association of Professional Chaplains* 23, no. 2 (Autumn/Winter, 2003): 14.

would check back with the potential participant after they had the time to reflect and discern whether they truly desired to be a research participant.

One of the first discoveries made by the researcher was how quickly individuals in the fragile stages of life can lose hope and a sense of meaning and significance when they are unable to engage in the world in the ways they are accustomed. In all, the researcher made thirty contacts with eligible participants over a nine-month study period. Of the first ten individuals the researcher identified as potential candidates for the field research, only one man, #120911, was able to participate in the field research process. Of the remaining nine individuals initially approached, five died and four became too ill or mentally incapacitated to participate.

The researcher recorded the record of decline of the first participant pool, briefly describing the specifics related to each fragile individual's reason for not participating as follows. A widower, (LB) was confined to his independent living apartment in a retirement center because of pancreatic cancer. Three weeks before the researcher was able to visit, the man was hospitalized and died within four days. A widow (JH), who was confined to her assisted living room for more than four years due to a degenerative nerve disease, agreed to participate in the study. She unexpectedly died in her sleep. A widower (HA) the oldest member of the congregation, who was still living independently at 104, became ill and died before he could participate in the study. An 86 year old widower who still lived independently in a retirement center (GO) died the weekend prior to the researcher's scheduled visit. An alert and vital woman at 96, an independently living widow (DH) fell, broke her hip, and became progressively more ill and confused. She died eight weeks after consenting to participate in the study.

Of the remaining four, illness or memory loss became a factor in their inability to participate. In mid-October, a 97-year young independently living widow (JP) fell and broke her hip. The pain was so great she was unable to concentrate. She continued to deteriorate in health moving first from rehabilitation to assisted living and is currently under hospice care, praying to die. Another 97-year young twice-widowed woman living independently (MGA) sustained a terrible fall, resulting in a broken pelvis, collarbone, and ribs. The pain management medications have left her confused and unable to respond to the research process. An 89-year young widow who was living independently (FP) experienced a fall in her home, resulting in broken ribs. She was transferred to an assisted living facility with the pain medications causing significant confusion. A single woman who lived independently in her own home at age 88 (DM) was diagnosed with blood clots in her legs. One week prior to the researcher's scheduled visit she had an emergency amputation followed by such significant complications she was unable to participate in the study. A newly widowed 88 year old woman (EK) living in an assisted living apartment declined to participate because she did not feel that she had the energy to participate in the research process.

Despite the initial setback in the deaths, declining health of the initial participants, and having to search for new participants, the delay provided the researcher with the opportunity to identify new research resources. Utilizing this invaluable time, the researcher was able to connect by e-mail on November 11, 2011 with Dr. Carla Penrod Hermann to receive permission to use the *Spiritual Needs Inventory* used by Dr. Hermann for the Ministry Model field study. This was a needed source of encouragement during the initial frustration of having to redefine the project participant pool.

Redefining the project participant pool also enabled the researcher to sharpen the open-ended interview questions so that participants might focus upon their feelings (or lack of feelings) about the nearness or closeness to God's presence. The researcher found great support from her collegial Spirituality and Aging Peer Group of the United Theological Seminary's DMIN program in framing the interview process and open-ended research questions at the January 23-27, 2012 Intensive.

During the Spirituality and Aging DMIN Peer Group telephone conference call on December 8, 2011, the researcher advised the faculty mentors and peer group members of the collapse of the initial participant group. It was agreed that she could move ahead to identify a second group of research study participants so that the research project could be completed by the projected date of March 30, 2012. At that time, Rev. Dr. Peggy Garrison and Dr. Richard Haid gave the researcher permission to limit the study group to ten participants even though it was agreed that this was not a statistically significant sample size. This determination was based upon the recognition that the initial pool of thirty individuals identified all possessed the qualifications and needs for the research study. All were experiencing some form of fragility in their spiritual or quality of life circumstances. The realization that nine of the initial ten prospects were likely experiencing losses related to significance, meaning, and self-valuation because of their aging circumstances offered credibility and validation to the researcher's hypothesis that without a sense of meaning and significance, individuals may lose hope and fruitfulness in their faith.

Thus, the researcher spent the next four weeks identifying new potential participants for the field research. By mid-January 2012, four members of the second

group of potential participants had died with another three developing such significant health conditions that they were unable to participate. Within the next two weeks, the researcher identified replacement participants to assure a survey cohort of ten fragile individuals. This new list of project participants fit the parameters for the ministry project model with the new participants ranging in ages from 75-98 with an equal gender distribution of five men and five women.

On December 9, 2011, the researcher had identified nine more prospects for the field research process. The researcher recorded the specific responses of the second set of identified prospects as follows.

A long time 86 year young widow (BF), living independently, declined to participate in the study, as she did not believe she possessed the traits of the group being studied. Another widow, aged 91, who had recently been hospitalized with COPD and complications also declined to participate, as she did not agree that she was living in a fragile place. A twice-widowed man, (#22812) aged 98, and living independently in a retirement center agreed to participate in the study.

A newly widowed 89-year-old (#121611), who is still struggling with grief from the loss of his wife, agreed to participate after learning of the research study from his daughter. A 79-year-young woman (#11512), who cared for a husband with Alzheimer's disease, eagerly volunteered to participate. An 84-year-old active woman (#011012), struggling with grief and loss because her 51-year-old son died in October and her 38-year-old daughter recently diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, volunteered to participate in the study upon hearing about it.

A couple, (A11312 and B11312), both in their ninth decade, agreed to participate in the study after being invited by the researcher to participate. Their participation was predicated on the request that they be interviewed together rather than separately so that they could hear each other's responses. Although this request seemed odd to the researcher, she was excited by the prospect of observing a married couple of 63 years respond to the field research process.

A frequent attendee (#22712) to Highland events with a friend, volunteered to participate in the research because she was experiencing a loss of significance and meaning due to being confined to a wheel chair following a hip replacement and the emergence of bone spurs at the site of the replacement. The extreme pain of the spurs has kept her wheel chair bound, ending her ability to come and go as she pleases. A twice widowed man, (#22812), who turns 99 in June and still lives independently in his own apartment volunteered to participate when invited to do so by the researcher.

Upon hearing about the research project, a 76-year young married woman with a degenerative bone and tissue condition asked the researcher if she might participate in the study. "I've heard that people on your research list die; I really am in so much pain that I want to die. Can I participate in your study?" Although this statement initially concerned the researcher, after involving this participant in the process, she realized the value of the research method to assist despairing and hope-deprived people an opportunity to grow in meaning and significance. The final participant, (#31312), was recommended by his daughter-in-law to participate in the study. As an 89-year-old widower, he is confined to an assisted living facility because of his inability to walk. He prefers to stay in his room, watching television and visiting only with family members when they stop to visit.

The researcher decided that the first two participants would serve as ‘test subjects’ to determine if any needed changes in the Ministry Model were necessary. After completing the first participant interview process (surveys, interviews, feedback responses, post-test), the first study participant became extremely distressed by the use of the term ‘frail aging’ which was originally used in the first participant permission form description of the project. The 91-year-old participant did not view himself as being frail and argued with the researcher that the use of this term to describe active (although fragile) older adults was not helpful and was ill advised.

The researcher was able to revise the language of the permission slip and the project information, inserting the recommended term ‘fragile’ rather than the term ‘frail’ in the research project model. Although the medical community emphasizes two types of older, older adults (active and frail), the researcher discovered that none of the project participants wanted to be labeled as being ‘frail.’ Most of the participants had difficulties with the term ‘fragile’ but agreed, after considering their life situation that they each had times where they experienced ‘fragility’ in the living out of their lives.

The definition of fragility was underscored through the ensuing interview process, wherein it became clear that none of the participants desired to be labeled as being frail. However, each reluctantly agreed that they were walking through a time of fragility, whether it was spiritual, emotional, mental, or physical. As a result of this finding, the researcher, at the January 2012 Intensive Peer Group meeting, requested a change in the Ministry Project title to “Fruitful Faith in the Fragile Years: Assuring Meaning And Significance.” The faculty and peer group mentors and the DMIN Office agreed to the revision. The research project permission slips and dissertation were updated to reflect

this change. The peer group was also helpful in assisting in the design of the three open-ended questions to make sure that the participants were encouraged to talk about the closeness or nearness to God that each experienced.

Originally, the researcher anticipated that the two qualitative surveys, *The Santa Clara Strength of Faith Instrument* and the *Spiritual Needs Inventory*, would provide the needed objective data to offer a basis and direction for the field interviews. However, following the test interviews, it was evident that the primary purpose for using the *Santa Clara Strength of Faith Instrument* was to offer a starting point to understand the level to which each individual valued the strength of their faith. Thus, the *Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith* survey was used as a pre and post-test. The instrument was scored to arrive at a single cumulative score. A score of ten indicated a very low interest or valuing of faith or spirituality. A score of forty indicated a very strong valuing or reliance upon faith needs. The Ministry Model research participants scored between 40 as a high and 30 as a low with a mean of 34.

The Spiritual Needs Inventory, the second instrument completed by participants, was used solely to gather a preliminary understanding of how each individual understood their need for spiritual or quality of life practices. Unlike the original intentional purpose of this survey by Clara Hermann, the Ministry Model researcher was not interested in comparing changes between individuals or using the instrument to account for pre- and post- test changes. The researcher's purpose in using the *Spiritual Needs Inventory* instrument was to gain an overall sense of what needs each individual participant desired from his or her quality of life and spiritual practices, prior to engaging in the open-ended interview process.

As the test interviews were completed, it became obvious to the researcher that the crucial element of the field methodology was in how each individual experienced a sense of the researcher's ministry of presence. How they recounted their stories, how they were heard, and how they received the 'hearing' of what they had said through the listening and retelling of their individual stories was crucial to the field study process. Six of the participants were moved to tears as the researcher read the verbatim responses of the participants as she listened to what each had told her.

Analysis of Data

The analysis of the data is examined in six phases. The areas of assessment include: (1) Qualitative Surveys, (2) Open-ended Interviews, (3) Feedback Sessions, (4) Recommendations from Faculty Mentors, (5) Recommendations from the Statistician, and (6) Research Outcomes.

The Qualitative Survey Instruments, the first phase of the analysis process, began with the participants completing Qualitative Survey Instruments. At the initial meeting, the researcher described the research methodology, gave each participant a copy of the permission slip as she explained the research process once again, obtained the participants' signatures or verbal permissions (for those unable to see and write), and administered the *Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Instrument*. The researcher gave the single page to the participant and observed as each completed the ten statements.

Following the completion of the *Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Instrument*, the researcher administered the *Spiritual Needs Inventory*, observing how each participant completed the instrument. All but one individual went through the

Inventory by completing the questions across the page. One individual required coaching to return to the beginning of the survey to complete the questions as to whether the need was being met in their life right now.

The researcher coded the responses to the *Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Instrument* by calculating the total score for the survey. The score from the pre-test was compared to the post-test. The mean of all the participants' responses was calculated and charted for submission to the statistician.

Open-ended Interviews comprised the second phase of the assessment. The researcher returned for a second interview to seek responses to the three open-ended questions. Each participant answered the questions in order as the researcher listened carefully, maintaining eye contact, and mirroring the participants' postures and facial expression to assure a continuing sense of listening and presence. Only one participant had difficulty relating to the researcher's eye contact. Interestingly, this same person also had difficulty completing the written survey instruments. The pre and post-test responses of this particular individual were inconsistent with the other participants' scores in that their scores were significantly higher than the mean on the pre-test and significantly lower than the mean on the post-test score. The researcher documented the responses to each question immediately following the interview process for the purpose of recording as accurately as possible the manner in which the individual responded in phraseology and verbatim wording.

Feedback Sessions were the third phase of assessing the participants in the research. The researcher visited each participant a third time for reading the responses that she heard from the participant at the previous meeting. Prior to reading back to the

participants' their response to each question, the researcher prefaced the reading with this statement: "*Is this what you wanted me to hear?*" She then proceeded to read the response to the question. Six of the respondents were moved to tears upon hearing their own words being read to them. Five individuals provided corrections to specific words, or added additional phrases to help clarify what they wanted the researcher to hear about their particular situation. In all ten cases, the individuals expressed that the researcher had listened well and had heard almost exactly, what they were trying to tell the researcher.

The lesson learned from the feedback response sessions is more than that the researcher listens well. More importantly, the individuals living in the midst of fragile circumstances possess a very significant need to have someone listen carefully to them. The process of being present and engaging in active listening that mirrors back to individuals what it is that is being heard is extremely important. Fragile seniors want to be heard. They want to have someone value them enough to spend time with them and really hear what they are saying. Ministry of presence and effective listening skills are essential to the nurturing and relational process. When fragile seniors are isolated or left alone they are removed from the relational nurturing of the larger community, whether it is the church, the retirement community dining room, or the hospitality of friends and neighbors. A caregiver who can sit quietly and not say a word is more valuable to a fragile older adult than someone who comes to give advice or share personal opinions. Listening is golden. The researcher completed each visit by giving each individual the post-test of the *Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Instrument*.

The fourth phase was the Recommendations from Faculty Mentors. This same group offered advice and support to the researcher during the prospect identification

phase of the project. The mentors were also supportive in helping the researcher identify some questions to ask the statistician as a part of validating qualitative findings. First, what statistical tools are recommended for the appropriate handling of the research data? Second, what is the most effective way of handling the data calculations? Third, what is the appropriate way to communicate the results of the statistical analysis? The faculty mentors also approved the researcher's request to include the May 5th Celebrate Living Conference as a tangible resource outcome of the researcher's Field Ministry Project. This approval meant that the researcher would include in Appendix D on pages 179-184 the planning process and the actual conference schedule as the resource outcomes for this field ministry project.

The fifth phase of the research assessment included the Recommendations from Statistician. Brian Ellis, doctoral candidate and Associate Principal of Manheim Township High School, was selected to analyze the coded data. Mr. Ellis is familiar with the normative statistical measurements and standardized statistical tests used to assure validity, reliability and variances among qualitative sample data, including the statistical *t*-test and F-test, which are often applied to qualitative human subject research projects.

Mr. Ellis recommended using a *t*-test to assess the results of the Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith instrument. The *t*-test compares the mean scores from the pre and post-tests to determine if the data is statistically significant. He indicated that an F-test was not appropriate for this data because there was no need to compare one individual to another. Mr. Ellis utilized the coded data, inserting it into predetermined formulas in a Microsoft Office Excel spreadsheet.³ He completed his work by explaining

³ Microsoft Office Excel. Analysis Tool Pak-VBA (calculated on April 4, 2012).

to the researcher the meaning of the various values utilized in the t -test formula so that she could write up the conclusions in an appropriate manner.

The sixth assessment area of the field test is to examine the Research Outcomes, which involves three specific phases of the research. As a follow-up to the research process, the researcher examined the results of the following: (1) Qualitative Surveys, (2) Interview Processes, and (3) Feedback Response Visits.

An examination of the Qualitative Survey Results involves analyzing how the results of the one group pre-test and post-test design compared a single pre-test measurement score to a single post-test measurement score following a qualitative treatment method of open-ended interviews and reflection of the participants' responses. One set of data was outside of the normative mean with the scores being significantly higher than the norm for the pre-test and significantly lower than the norm for the post-test. It was concluded, based upon observance of the participant at each administration of the instrument, that something was affecting the individual's ability to respond appropriately to the instrument. The results for this participant were set aside and not included in the analysis.

The data suggests that there is a statistically significant correlation to the researcher's hypothesis that the valuing of an individual's strength of religious faith can be affected positively through an intervention such as the open-ended interview process in which the participants engaged with the listening researcher. The p -value of 1.6 percent is less than the standard 5 percent representing the null hypothesis. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis can be accepted. Recognizing that a statistically significant sample size is approximately 25 participants, the t -test results for

the smaller sample size of nine individuals still indicate that the findings are statistically significant. This evaluation of the mean change from pre-test and post-test values offers insight and support for the findings also discovered through the qualitative open-ended interview process. The results indicate a bell curve of responses for the participants with four participants indicating no change, and five participants indicating an increase in scores from the initial pre-test to the post-test.

In summary, the single score responses of the ten individuals to the pre and post tests represent a normal bell curve distribution of a test population. The three part listening model for ministry may have had an impact upon five of the ten individuals as related to the strength of their religious faith. For four people, the intervention seems to have had no statistically significant impact upon the strength of their religious faith as indicated through the instrument. Were the sample size increased to 25 participants, it is anticipated that the results would be similar.

Analysis of the Interview Processes reveals that each of the ten participants engaged fully with the researcher in sharing their stories about times when they did or did not feel close to God. Two of the participants reported no 'felt sense' or 'heart warming' experience of God. Rather, they described a solid sense of knowing, a cognitive trust of God's presence and action in the world. They both indicated that they rarely experienced any emotional sensing, but experienced the world through strong cognition and logic rather than a felt emotional state.

Each of the ten individuals reported specific experiences of knowing God's presence with them in their early life. Five indicated that presently they experienced a lack of strong connection to a 'sensing' of God's presence although three reported that

they continued to trust God even without any emotional or felt evidence. Two individuals expressed a sense of being completely integrated into their experience of life, so much so that they expressed similar words and descriptions as noted by Joan Erikson related to the observation of *trancendence*.⁴

The five men who participated were in their ninth decade. Each was of sound mind and had a sense of value and significance that did not seem to be based upon what they were able to do or not do. The five women who participated ranged in age from 76 to 94. Each was of sound mind. Each was struggling with a sense that they were not doing enough for God, or were not as valued by God because they could no longer get up and out to ‘do’ for others. The women seemed to experience more difficulties with not being able to accomplish things for God than did the men who participated in the project. Thus, a question that emerges is whether the role of women in the “doing” of life and of faith as experienced through ‘church’ negatively contributes to a woman’s sense of meaning and significance in times of fragility. Perhaps a follow-up research project might be designed to seek answers to such observations.

The following lessons learned from the interview process are important to others engaged in pastoral care or the nurturing of individuals experiencing fragile times:

1. Being present with people who are living through times of emotional, spiritual, physical or mental fragility is one of the most important ways to demonstrate love, care and support.
2. It is more important to simply ‘be’ with a person in need than to say anything.
3. When individuals are walking through fragile times, inviting them to share their own story, to reflect upon their own experience of God’s presence is more powerful for them than having a visitor talk ‘to’ or ‘at’ them or to give advice or opinions.

⁴ Joan M. Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed: Extended Version* (New York, W.W. Norton: 1997), 127.

4. An individual's personal sense of value, meaning, and significance is strengthened and empowered when their opinions and feelings are heard, valued, and responded to with dignity and honoring by the listener.
5. An active listener, whether pastor, chaplain, care-giver, family member or friendly visitor, models God's love, grace, nurture, and presence to the fragile aging individual.
6. When listeners invite a person to share the stories of when they have experienced nearness to God, the activity of recalling and retelling their stories rekindles a sense of relatedness and being valued by God for the special person that they are (rather than what they are able to do).

Lastly, the results of Feedback Response Visits reflect that an amazing recognition occurred when the researcher visited the ten participants for the third time and read the responses that she had heard each person give to the open-ended interview questions. Six of the participants (two men and four women) began to tear or cry. However, they quickly recovered looking slightly embarrassed by their emotional display.

To maintain uniformity and objectivity of the research model, the researcher decided not to ask the individuals about what it was that caused them to cry. One of the difficulties in maintaining a standardized research method means that the normal opportunities afforded by a pastoral or chaplaincy visit to follow-up on emotional responses or intriguing ideas and responses generated by respondents must be avoided to maintain consistency of interview method.

The researcher made a conscious effort and difficult decision not to ask about the tears. It was very clear the tears they were shedding upon hearing their own faith stories recounted by the researcher embarrassed each person. Four other individuals felt the

need to correct the researcher about the facts that seemed slightly incorrect. In chaplaincy training, the researcher learned that some individuals ‘cover’ their emotional distress by over-focusing upon facts. The researcher wondered if this was the dynamic at work in the four participants, who seemed more attuned to getting the facts right than hearing what they had expressed.

The hearing of their own stories seemed to effect a positive change in the individuals’ valuing of themselves and their faith perspective in the moment. The responses to the post-test seemed to underscore this positive change, especially in five individuals whose scores increased because of the listening and reflective response session.

The lesson for others is that when individuals are encouraged to share their life experience and personal stories of faith and God’s presence in their lives, with the stories reflected back to them in their own words, the individuals remember and re-experience that moment of feeling God’s grace and presence with them. What occurs is more than a simple recounting of an experience. A renewed sense of God’s presence seems awakened within them through the experience of telling their experience and then rehearing the story recounted back to them in their own words. Such faith awareness and awakening is similar to what happens to disciples of all ages with the telling and retelling of the Christmas birth narratives in a Christmas Eve worship service or a children’s Christmas pageant.

The findings of the implementation of the researcher’s Model in Ministry seem to provide insight into how fragile aging individuals can find meaning and significance and experience fruitfulness in their faith. The act of telling and rehearing their own stories

about when they experienced a fruitful faith in God suggests that the listening and mirroring back of participants' faith stories may assist individuals to reclaim and grow in the valuing of their present experience of faith and sense of closeness to God.

Outcomes

An unanticipated outcome that resulted from the DMIN Ministry Model was the envisioning and the development of an implementation process to offer a Senior Life Institute that will begin in September 2012. From the results and learning derived through the Ministry Model implementation process, it became evident to the researcher and the context associates that an interactive, relational, and growth-oriented learning model was needed to assure that older adults learn the skills needed to remain fruitful in faith in the fragile times of their lives. Strongly supported by the Senior Ministry Leadership Team of Highland Church, the Highland Fund, and the Care and Compassion Council of the Highland governing Session, the Senior Life Institute will provide opportunities for adult learning and development in the areas of discipleship, life coping skills, life enrichment and relationship-building and networking. Each Thursday, the Institute will offer a variety of relational learning opportunities taught by a cadre of experts drawn from the fields of education, health management, faith-based learning, and life enrichment. The purpose of the Institute is to offer the necessary interactive and skill-based learning options so as to prepare individuals to flourish and remain fruitful as 'human-beings' rather than 'human-doings'⁵

⁵ Doug Good, "Care and Compassion Report to the Highland Presbyterian Church Session" (report presented at the monthly meeting of the Session of Highland Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, PA (April 3, 2012).

As a kick-off event and promotional outreach tool, the Senior Ministry Leadership Team and the Care and Compassion Ministries will sponsor a day-long conference entitled “Celebrate Living: Love, Legacy and Laughter” hosting four specialists in the areas of life enrichment, recalling, and retelling life stories as legacy, sharing the secrets of one’s life and healing through laughter. The conference will engage the gifts of four of the researcher’s peer mentors from the Spirituality and Aging Peer Mentor Group of United Theological Seminary. The conference will serve as a ‘taste’ of the types of interactive learning to be offered through the Senior Life Institute in the fall. As an added bonus, a former DMIN peer group member, who has recently launched a new entrepreneurial venture, is expected to videotape the conference and reproduce the experience on DVD for purchase and distribution to individuals who are unable to attend the conference. This DVD will not be available in sufficient time to be included in the Final Project document.

The expectation is the Celebrate Living Conference will serve as a missional outreach. The goal is that the conference will attract individuals in their ‘third quarter of life’, who live in the twenty-six area retirement communities in Lancaster County, to visit Highland Church and discover the many ways that they can flourish and become fruitful in the living out of their remaining 50+ years of life. The researcher hopes that the Celebrate Living Conference will provide the Senior Life Institute Planning Team a test market opportunity so the ten-week Institute beginning in the fall of 2012 will respond to the self-identity, skill building, quality of life, and faith discovery expectations of Lancaster County retirees.

Appendix D on pages 179-184 provides the planning materials and a copy of the actual conference presenters' schedule at the conference. It is hoped that such models may be replicated by other churches, caregiver groups or non-profits engaged in supporting people living in the third stage of their lives—retirement and beyond!

The Model in Ministry findings on the spiritual and faith issues confronting Highland's aging membership serves as evidence that Highland Church must exercise its discipleship responsibilities by attending to the needs and concerns of its Senior Adults. Unfortunately, the smaller component of the church membership is engaging in a different stage of living such as earning a living, raising children, and securing their families. Many of the younger adults, youth, and children focus solely on their own immediate and extended family concerns.

As Highland moves ahead in its 2012-13 goals to implement missional outreach⁶ as a model for all of its ministries, it is anticipated that more opportunities will present themselves for significant intergenerational ministries and relationship building with younger members of the congregation. Plans are underway to offer more ways for the seven generations to relate together as community in meaningful intergenerational ministry and relational outreach to people of all ages.

⁶ Rev. Osborn's reference is to a book by Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009). The Session of Highland will be reading this and discussing *Introducing the Missional Church* during the 2012-2013 church year.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

Chapter Six is informative since it provides a reflection, summary, and conclusion of the field research process. The essential observations, conclusions, and learning gained through the application of the research methodology are presented along with process recommendations for replication. The researcher suggests how the model might be modified in light of the field experience results. The groundwork laid by this research offers individuals who give care to more fragile senior adults many practical suggestions, resources, relevant ideas, and insights gained from the implementation of the Ministry Project.

Reflection

The researcher established research process and project goals at the outset of the Model in Ministry project. The intensive nature of the study, the peer mentoring process, and the project research resulted in the realization of the stated research objectives. Engagement in the research method enables the researcher to observe how more fragile aging congregants reframe and rekindle their faith perspectives and personal awareness of their nearness to God. Encouraged to tell their stories of faith and awareness of God, the participants delight in having someone listen actively and recount their stories. Their joyous reaction is an immeasurable outcome of the entire process.

Significant lessons and insights emerge through the field research and testing of the Model in Ministry. The results are relevant to individuals offering pastoral care and care giving as well as for empathetic family members who provide nurture. The findings underscore the importance of possessing a variety of skills: ministry of presence; active listening; encouragement of people to share their personal stories; and the ability to recount what is heard back to the storyteller in their own words, making sure the listener heard was what it was that the individual wanted them to hear.

Frail and fragile individuals struggle to cope with transitions related to physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual challenges. It is important that the listener enter the relationship with confidence in their abilities to listen. When the listener genuinely and authentically hears what another person is saying and remembers, records, and recounts what the person shares, a sense of truly being heard is given to the fragile individual. Ministry of presence involves not only hearing the words being spoken. True listening is the ability to hear beyond the words, observing body language, emotional nuances, and changes in verbal tone and voice quality. When one practices ministry of presence, there is no judging or criticism involved. One does not correct or finish the older adult's sentences when they pause. When the person repeats certain phrases or retells the story several times, a truly present listener will continue to hear the story being told; each time as if it is being shared for the very first time.

The initial delay in starting the field research due to the deaths of the initial participant pool allowed the researcher to discover new research resources. Connecting by e-mail with Dr. Carla Penrod Hermann, Rev. Osborne received permission to use the *Spiritual Needs Inventory* for the Ministry Model field study. The delay actually

produced an unexpected source of encouragement during the initial frustration of having to identify new prospects to participate in the field research. Reflection on the deaths of the initial group of participants reveals the value and significance of life. The only time any person has is the present. There is no prediction of how long any person will live. Tragedies can happen to any one at any time. As the research clearly revealed, people living in the fragile times of life, often find it easy to give up hope when they feel a sense of meaninglessness and insignificance. Is it easier to simply let go and let God take them to heaven?

Redefining the project participant pool gave the researcher time to revise the open-ended interview questions so that participants might focus upon their feelings (or lack of feelings) about the nearness or closeness to God's presence. Support from the researcher's collegial Spirituality and Aging Peer Group of the United Theological Seminary's DMIN program helped the researcher frame the interview process and open-ended research questions at the January 23-27, 2012 Intensive.

Although initially frustrated by what seemed to be continual delays in beginning the field research interview, the researcher discovered the value of allowing time for the process to work. Often in ministry, one focuses only on the immediate short-term accomplishment of a task without recognizing the larger scope of God's action through the unique process and timing of how life unfolds. In this particular case, the delays and need to identify new field research participants enabled additional opportunities to surface.

After completing the first participant interview process (surveys, interviews, feedback responses, post-test), the first study participant became extremely distressed by

the use of the term ‘frail aging’ which was originally used in the first participant consent form description of the project. The 91-year-old participant did not view himself as being frail and argued with the researcher that the use of this term to describe active, (although fragile) older adults was not helpful and was ill advised. The researcher revised the language of the consent form and the project information, inserting the recommended term ‘fragile’ rather than the term ‘frail’ in the research project model.

Despite things that went wrong in the process, several elements were extremely helpful in promoting a successful model. The open-ended field interview questions worked well to start the reminiscence and recalling of one’s faith stories. The questions enabled the participants to engage at a much deeper level of sharing with the researcher about matters of faith that they were experiencing or were concerned about. By asking for recommendations, each individual was encouraged to offer positive and pro-active ways to enhance ministry and promote the experience of a fruitful faith. Participants became fully engaged in the Model in Ministry when asked to offer opinions and suggestions for how to prepare ministers, caregivers, and family members in supporting aging adults.

Recommendations for Supporting Fragile, Older Adults

Asking senior adults directly about the perceptions they hold as they face their particular experience of the aging process is a first step to uncovering the fear and uncertainties they may possess. The recommendations that follow offer insights for individuals who seek to relate with and nurture older, more fragile seniors:

1. Listen in silence.
2. Do not ask old people about health concerns unless you really, really want to know how they feel.

3. Be prepared to stay awhile to listen to it all!
4. Respect those of us who are old and realize that we are in need of companionship.
5. Be genuine and authentic.
6. Do not try to tell us you know what we are feeling.
7. Pray for what we tell you about—not for what you think we want to hear!
8. While presence is extremely important, so is touch; hugs are always welcome!
9. Do not be afraid to grab my hand when you pray with me.
10. Stop to visit me without an appointment.
11. Be interested in my welfare and willing to spend time with me—even if I am unable to talk.
12. Do not treat me as though I am a project or another name to check off your list.
13. Treat me as a unique and separate person.
14. I want to be loved and experience as a human being with value, meaning, and significance—simply for who I am!
15. When you are present with me, I experience myself as a person who matters to you!
16. Let me be exactly who I am!
17. Tell the truth to folks about what is really happening with us and what is going on inside.
18. Walk in our shoes and try to analyze from where we are coming.
19. Just as children are different, no two older people are alike.
20. Try to realize what we are dealing with—all the aging and loss issues—what we think about and what our life is like.
21. One size does not fit all when it comes to listening and being with older adults.
22. They should train ministers in seminary to listen, empathize, and be genuine.
23. Do not force emotions that you do not have or have never experienced!

24. Take the time to call and check on me without scheduling a visit.
25. Acknowledge me when I suffer a death in my family or the loss of someone close to me.
26. We need to have relationships that make us feel honored and accepted as God's children.
27. Let us share with you how we feel or do not feel about God.
28. Long visits are not necessary.
29. Pay attention to our needs.
30. Even if we do not hear well, just your coming is helpful.

The researcher's ability to provide active listening along with ministry of presence was a major factor in developing a rapport of comfort and trust with the participants. Combining those skills with the ability to demonstrate having heard their message through accurate recording and feedback became a plus for the researcher. The incorporation of the phrase, "is this what you wanted me to hear?" was definitely a simple yet significant way to elicit additional information at the third feedback interview.

Not all models work without flaws, and this is true for the Ministry Model. In its initial field design, the researcher anticipates that using two separate qualitative surveys is useful to the overall process, offering insight and information to inform the second visit and the open-ended interview process. In actuality, there is no real need for the second qualitative instrument, the *Spiritual Needs Inventory*.

First, the instrument itself was difficult for the individuals to complete. Not only was it too long, but the researcher observed the frustration shown by the facial expressions of the participants as they completed it. Second, participants seemed confused by the multiple options presented. The five-scale approach appeared too

difficult for the frailer aging participants to process. Third, the final category that queried whether they were presently experiencing the particular element in their lives seemed hard for participants to determine. If the researcher were to do the project over again, the second survey instrument would be omitted. Only the pre and post-tests assessing the participant's strength of religious faith would be used in the revised Model in Ministry.

The researcher felt enjoyment and fulfillment in engaging in the field research process. The goal of the project was to encourage individuals to reflect upon their faith journey and to describe times when they sensed a particular closeness to God's presence. An unexpected outcome was the level to which each individual developed a deeper relationship with the researcher as Minister and as a person. By being valued and heard while also being sought after for their faith experience and recommendations for how Ministers and Chaplains could learn from them, participants gained a sense of meaning and significance simply by being involved in the process. When the case study feedback responses were coded for similarities of themes and phases, the researcher identified three significant commonalities:

1. All participants identified an experience of God's presence by describing a relationship with a particular family member or friend who experienced some level of healing and wholeness through answers to private and intercessory prayer support.
2. All participants recognized the importance of having a minister or chaplain present with them, without talking but rather to be available to listen and to hear fully what the individual was expressing without judgment or criticism. Each participant said it was better for a Minister to sit quietly in complete presence rather than to give advice or quote scriptures.
3. All participants received a significant sense of valuing and honoring of themselves as individuals when asked to participate in the researcher's project. All expressed that they felt a strong sense of meaning and significance because their opinions and feelings were heard and valued.

The researcher listened with great feeling and compassion to each person. Despite wanting to respond with advice or resource support, the researcher was constrained by the project methodology to simply listen and really hear what the participant said. It was important to the researcher to be able to reflect back verbatim of what she heard. The process of being listened to intensely and carefully was deeply affirming for each participant. The experience caused each individual to value his or her own faith walk more deeply. It helped them to not only remember times when they felt God present, but reminded them that God could be present in their current situation as well.

As briefly identified in Chapter Five, six key discoveries emerged through the three-part interview and feedback process. First, being present with people who are living through times of emotional, spiritual, physical, or mental fragility is one of the most important ways to demonstrate love, care, and support. It is not simply the spending of one's time to listen to what a person says. The intentionality of the listener in remaining completely still, mirroring back to the person exactly as they present themselves to the listener through similar gestures, facial expressions and non-verbal response, encourages the person talking to share more completely. Non-judgmental, unconditionally loving, and fully engaged listening to a person who is struggling with issues of meaning and significance non-verbally emphasizes their importance and value as a beloved child of God.

Second, it is more important simply to 'be' with a person in need than to say anything. Because each individual is different and each person has a unique life experience and special faith journey, there is no possible way that another person can know how each individual feels or what they need to hear. The one thing that a caring

person can do is be present and listen. Fragile seniors are often left alone. They have much to say and a high level of needing to be heard by an active listener.

Third, when individuals are walking through fragile times, inviting them to share their own story, to reflect upon their own experience of God's presence is more powerful for them than having a visitor talk 'to' or 'at' them or to give advice or opinions. Being able to listen to one recount their own experience of God, present and active in their life, even if it was years earlier, reaffirms their sense of being valued and significant in God's eyes. When the active listener is able to retell the story back to them as they listen, it is as though their own faith journey is being re-enacted again in the present moment.

Fourth, an individual's personal sense of value, meaning, and significance is strengthened and empowered when their opinions and feelings are heard, valued, and responded to with dignity and honoring by the listener. "I matter and I have value, if you stop by to hear my own story." The power of listening is the glue that holds relationships together. Seniors struggling with their own sense of value and meaning are supported, nurtured, and encouraged simply through the act of sharing their opinions and feelings uninterrupted or in an environment of complete and total acceptance and love.

Fifth, an active listener, whether pastor, chaplain, care-giver, family member, or friendly visitor, models God's love, grace, nurture, and presence to the fragile aging individual. The simple presence of individuals with an aging senior is more valuable than most people realize.

Sixth, when listeners invite the person to share the stories of when they have experienced nearness to God, the activity of recalling and retelling their stories rekindles a sense of relatedness and being valued by God for the special person that they are (rather

than what they are able to do). Valuable nurturing occurs by allowing the senior to tell their story in their own words.

The field Ministry Model related extremely well to the original hypothesis by helping fragile individuals regain their sense of meaning and significance. Hearing what they had said as reflected back to them in the feedback sessions helped them to recognize that they still have the potential to be fruitful in faith, even if they can no longer ‘do something.’ What God desires is that people ‘be’ in relationship and continually abide in God’s love. The findings of the research affirm and uphold the researcher’s original field test hypothesis.

God does not necessarily desire disciples to be ‘successful’ in the terms that corporate America or culture defines. More often than not, God calls disciples to be faithful in the midst of the process of walking the journey of faith. While much of the Ministry Model turned out to be a success, there were parts of the process that were less helpful.

For the first fifteen individuals who originally wanted to be a participant in the field research, life or health circumstances intervened so that they were unable to participate. In being faithful to the process developed by the initial Model in Ministry methodology, the researcher discovered how quickly and unexpectedly a fragile aging stage of living can develop. A second realization was how many individuals are living in some type of fragility: spiritual, physical, emotional, or cognitive. The value of the Ministry Model is that it enables anyone offering relational care, encouragement, and nurture to realize that the most important engagement that they can have in any visit with a fragile aging person is to encourage them to talk about their own journey of faith with

the Triune God. If that happens, any chaplain, minister, caregiver, or family member will be a faithful disciple of God, bearing the ministry of presence where it is needed most.

Summary

The Model in Ministry helped the researcher understand many of the issues related to encouraging fruitful faith in the fragile years. This summary offers answers to the initial research questions.

First, what resources are available to assist caregivers supporting care-receivers who resist care? The process of identifying and attempting to include thirty fragile prospective participants seems to indicate that each person has a choice for how they respond to their unique circumstances of aging. Some, affected by childhood experiences, early training, and immediate family system expectations, choose to seek out or receive from others what they need to confront and respond to the changing circumstances they encounter. Others choose not to receive support or nurture from caregivers.

The number of people who died before the researcher could engage them in an active listening process, points to the possibility that without support fragile aging people may lose hope, despair, and then move quickly into death. The purpose of the field research was not to study or document such a thesis. However, there seems to be a potential link to the rapidity of the onset of death and the frail and fragile circumstances, which individuals experienced. While health conditions may be partly to blame, the possibility exists that the individuals' sense of despair, loss of hope, and lack of meaning encouraged a choice to let go of earthly life to enter God's joyful, abundant, and eternal life. More research is needed to substantiate such a hypothesis.

When individuals are serious about not receiving support from caregivers, no one can force nurture and care upon them. However, it is clear from the case study responses, that when a caregiver is willing to engage in the ministry of presence, to listen, amazing things may occur in the life of the fragile person. Inviting the fragile individual to talk about their faith experience and recall their sense of closeness with God encourages belief and faith that God remains present with them.

An essential resource available to all caregivers is the gift of the ministry of presence. The act of intentional and active listening is perhaps, the most vital gift that a caregiver can bestow upon any care-receiver. Such listening and care must be genuine, authentic, without judgment, or expectation of any outcome or change on the part of the care-receiver. Ministry of presence and active listening are not about ‘fixing’ a person or their situation. True ministry of presence offers nurturing and support with the sense that the fragile person is not alone in the journey they face.

Second, how do individuals advancing in age continue to grow and develop in their spiritual fruitfulness and connections with God? Each person has a unique and special faith journey in walking with the Triune God. Ministers, chaplains, caregivers, and family members may support fragile older adults in the spiritual reflection process. Such reflection may be encouraged by caregivers taking the initiative to show up to visit as an active listener.

Careful listeners can prompt fragile seniors to reflect upon their closeness to God as they recount personal life circumstances and memories. Thus, aging adults are given the opportunity to express their own insights, which also enhances their self-esteem as valued children of God. The listener gives the gift of meaningfulness and significance

through the caring process. The listener is able to model for the fragile senior the caring and concern that God has for each person. Through the process of telling their stories, having these stories recounted back to them, the fragile person is able to re-establish their sense of trust in God's presence with them.

Third, how are Ministers, Chaplains, and other caregivers to respond to questions like the following: (1) "Is this all there is to life?"; (2) "My faith no longer seems to matter to me."; (3) "I can no longer "feel" God's presence with me."; (4) "I'm not afraid of death, but I no longer sense God with me."; and (5) "Where has God gone? I've been a faithful Christian my whole life, but now I feel that I'm all alone!" Questions like these are signals that the person is struggling with underlying concerns about meaning, significance, and whether they matter or have value in God's eyes. Usually, the individual desperately needs and wants to answer such questions for themselves. The fragile individual best answers the questions as others give support and nurture to them using ministry of presence.

It is the observation of the researcher that usually when individuals engage in asking such questions, they are engaging in their own developmental process of determining where God's presence can be recognized in the midst of the circumstances in which they are living. The best response for a caregiver is to be quiet and let the person struggle with arriving at the answers for themselves. The best way to support a fragile senior is to enable ministry of presence, mirroring, and the telling and rehearing of the person's own stories.

Fourth, why is it that for a generation of the church's most faithful stewards and church builders, at the point of their greatest need in the aging process, the older "older

adults” feel a sense of anomie and disconnectedness? How can the church best address the concerns of the very elderly Christians who no longer sense God’s direct presence in their lives? Perhaps the training and the message of Christianity in the United States reflects its culture and the inherent expectations of the “American Dream” that if you work hard, are persistent, and do good things, God will reward you with good stuff.

Maybe what fragile older adults learned in the church about God is not what God really wants humanity to know. Scripture is filled with stories of limited, broken human beings, who tried to ‘do’ for God yet ended up in utter failure. The message of both the Old and New Testaments is that God loves people for who they are, not what they do. Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, stops and seeks out the one lost lamb, rather than worrying about the 99 safe sheep! Perhaps helping fragile seniors discover the reality of grace and love of the Triune God is the better lesson for the church to share. Rather than berating older adults for not ‘doing more for God,’ perhaps the better message to affirm is: “God desires to ‘be’ in relationship and community with people regardless of the physical, emotional, cognitive, or spiritual condition!”

Fifth, if the presence of spiritual needs can affect the physical nature of the heart and its function, what then, will the sense that God is no longer present with them do to the quality, meaning, and significance of faith, life, health, and wholeness of older people? How can pastoral ministry respond in practical ways to alleviate the sense of disconnectedness, which some older “older adults” have from God? The responses from the field interviews involving ten different individuals indicates that when people believe they can no longer ‘do’ for God, they feel distanced and isolated from God. A few of the participants responded that they felt God was ‘mad at them for not doing more.’ The

findings appear to show a potential need for the Church to reaffirm God's love and gracious acceptance of individuals who are not able to 'do' anything. Ministry of presence, active listening, short visits, and showing care through loving acts of nurture and support are ways that caregivers can model grace that God offers without conditions.

Sixth, is the faith crisis among fragile aging Christians generated because individuals' no longer feel they matter to their outer world? Has the aging adult's faith crisis broken their personal relationship to God? If a person can no longer relate beyond the confines of their own living quarters, does this affect how they understand their value in God's eyes? Do fragile seniors transfer this sense of worthlessness to how they relate and are emotionally aware of the Divine? The findings from this field research would answer such questions with a resounding, "Yes!"

Seventh, has the mainline reformed Protestant tradition and Puritan work ethic so imbued the faith experience of the "Builder" and "Great" Generations that they have no faith experience apart from their work for God? The individuals interviewed in the testing of this Model in Ministry seem to indicate that this concern may be true. It may also be likely that younger generations have a similar understanding of how God values them. Perhaps the organized church's emphasis upon volunteerism to support and respond to the many mission, ministry, and outreach projects being accomplished locally and globally is at fault. Maybe church leaders should make the intentional focus about helping people nurture their personal relationship with God. The new message for discipleship should be to encourage congregants to relate with God through prayer, quiet times and spending time dwelling in God's presence. Another way is to help all disciples,

including aging ones, recognize the spiritual gifts and virtues God offers to ‘be with God.’

Eighth, is the crisis of faith observed among fragile older adults a normal developmental phase of the fragile aging process? The historical and scientific research conducted through this project seems to suggest that some fragile older adults experience the crisis of faith as a normal part of the spiritual formation and developmental phase of the aging process. Yet, not all individuals who are frail or experience fragile times in their lives have such faith crises. More research can elaborate on why not all aging seniors have a faith crisis.

Ninth, is it possible to help individuals undergoing such an experience to move to a new place of faith based upon the ‘fruitfulness of being’ rather than the ‘significance of doing’? The results of the Model in Ministry indicate such movement is possible. An opportunity exists for researchers to develop an intentional survey instrument assessing the fruitfulness of being and the significance of doing. However, there is also a need for someone to develop a training module to help individuals become more aware of their unique identity as human beings, their giftedness, and their virtues by merely being God’s beloved children.

Finally, a question emerged about whether the role of women in the “doing” of life and of faith as experienced through ‘church’ negatively contributes to a woman’s sense of meaning and significance in times of fragility. A follow-up research project designed to determine how the drive by some women ‘to do’ if their faith lives changes in their aging years is an interesting possibility. In fact, the potential for additional studies growing out of this research project are numerous.

Conclusion

The results of this study can impact profoundly on Highland Presbyterian Church and other congregations who have a large majority of aging and fragile older adults. As a large metropolitan area church, Highland's vigorous support of the new Senior Life Institute is foundationally significant by reaching out to a group of people in search of emotional and spiritual support. Not only can the church host these events, but also its members will have the opportunity to grow into the aging process themselves knowing they have a spiritual and faith based support system to walk this journey. Such a philosophy blends naturally into the expressed philosophy endorsed by a church-wide task force committee in 2007.

The Mission Study Committee of Highland Church recognized the strong desire of the membership for an "authentic sense of belonging, purpose, and relationship."¹ Such a desire remains strong in the lives of the senior members, many who struggle with multiple losses and grief related to aging, illnesses, and deaths of friends, family members, and spouses. This authentic sense of belonging, purpose, and relationship is common to all congregants in the diversity of sizes, geographical regions, and denominational settings.

An underlying spiritual need of the Body of Christ is to connect with the reality and power of the living God in and through their relationship with Jesus Christ. Discipleship development and spiritual fruitfulness are vital to older adults who struggle with issues of meaning, significance, and fruitfulness as they experience the bittersweet journey of aging. The proposed model for the new Senior Life Institute has the potential

¹ Report of the Highland Presbyterian Church Mission Study Committee, "Mission Study Report" (Lancaster, PA: November, 2007), 18.

to lead the way to generating a new sense of community among older adults and with other age groups in the Highland community, and with other congregations. Reviving the Parish Visitation Ministry is a terrific way to awaken congregational discipleship within the congregation. What a simple but wonderful way for younger adults and youth to make new friends while bringing friendship and Christian companionship to those who long to have someone stop in for a visit or call to see how they are doing. In life, the simplest things are often the most important way to let people know they are cared for and loved.

The possibilities for involving multiple generations in congregational activities are as long as one has the creativity to implement. As in many congregations, Highland's senior ministry group is one of the most active groups in the congregation. What if the library set up a 'story time' so some of the aging adults could read a story to the young children? Why not have covered-dish dinners during the week? What if there were brunch before church in the summer? Should the youth volunteer to help aging seniors with chores? Regrettably, there is a noticeable lack of interaction with younger age groups, including young adults, because of generational preferences, worship styles, and cultural norms.

Facing challenges is not always a welcomed undertaking. Yet, everyone experiences difficulties and challenges in their everyday life. The reality is each one will face the same physical changes that those advancing in age are now experiencing. The Bible gives numerous examples of how to handle life's changes. Although an aged widow herself, Dorcas (Tabitha) in the book of Acts, took it upon herself to become a disciple who tended to other widows by making sure they had clothing and garments.

Dorcas' friends loved her so much that when she died, the widows sent for Peter, who happened to be in town preaching. Peter changed his plans to go back to the city and pray for Dorcas. Like Elijah, Peter's prayers resulted in a miracle of resurrection. Brought back to life, Dorcas and her friends rejoiced with tears of joy and celebration.²

Although one's visits with the elderly may not be as restorative as was Peter's visit, one never knows if the acts of kindness and love for seniors may not revive their spirits and optimism by bringing them joy and Christian love. The widows who wept for Dorcas felt a new sense of being and fruitfulness when their beloved friend came back to life.³ Being a disciple does not mean one has to leave home and go to a foreign country or go out on a mission work trip. Discipleship means sharing the love of Christ with others in the simplest ways just as Christ did.

The Model in Ministry field study on the spiritual and faith issues confronting Highland's aging membership is evidence that Highland Church must exercise its discipleship responsibilities to attend to the needs and concerns of its Senior Adults. Unfortunately, the smaller component of the church membership is engaging in a different stage of living such as earning a living, raising children, and securing their families. Many of the younger adults, youth, and children focus solely on their own immediate and extended family concerns. This is likely true for other congregations as well.

As the researcher demonstrates, Highland has a very high concentration of Senior Adults who continue in the aging process. The younger adults, youth, and children

² Acts 9:36-41 New International Version (NIV).

³ Acts 9:39,41 New King James Version (NKJV).

comprise almost one third of the church membership. Such disproportionate numbers have a negative dynamic on a congregation if ignored. Table 1.5 leaves little doubt that the distribution of the various age groups at Highland is asymmetrical. Highland's age distribution mirrors the trend nationally in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).⁴ The negative ramifications are obvious. However, if the focus shifts to the positive aspect, the premise that the aging population is thriving at Highland is acceptable.

Table 1.5. Total Numbers and Age Distribution of Highland Church

CATEGORY	AGES	NUMBER OF MEMBERS	% OF MEMBERSHIP
Senior Adults	60+	771	51%
Adults	40-59	554	27%
Young Adults	20-39	198	13%
Youth	14-19	48	3%
Children	0-13	84	6%
Totals		1507	100%

Source: Data adapted from Highland Presbyterian Church Management Membership by Age. All Church System Database Management System Technology (accessed: October 1, 2011).

The Senior Adults provide Highland's leadership pool. The future of Highland depends on the aging population taking the lead and demonstrating the initiative of bringing Senior Ministry into the forefront of Highland's programs. This group also has the right to lead Highland into the glory land where all God's children can enjoy a fruitful life of faith in the third stage of life (55+).

How do Highland and other churches respond to the needs of aging seniors as well as benefit from the findings of field study completed by the researcher? As the

⁴ The Rev. Dr. Roger Rabey, Senior Pastor of Highland Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, PA "Report of the General Assembly Meeting in Pittsburgh, PA July 2012" (July 8, 2012).

findings conclude, aging seniors respond positively when treated with respect and decency. Their spirits and self-esteem increase when treated in this manner. “What we owe the old is reverence, but all they ask for is consideration, attention, not to be discarded and forgotten. What they deserve is preference, yet we do not even grant them equality.”⁵ Caring for older people and treating the frailer, more aged elders with respect and kindness is truly an act of discipleship. It is also an act of self-respect and dignity.

However, how do we characterize ‘respect’ and ‘honor’? In *Mudhouse Sabbath*, Lauren F. Winner posits, “caring for and respecting our elders is the starting point for both Jewish and Christian teachings”⁶ Society seems to ask elders to age well while communities are to help the aging elders through the process. Whether one calls it aging, eldering, or saging, society seems to tread cautiously when approaching this subject. Research reports demonstrate that aging is not only the physical degeneration, but for many it also wears down the spiritual growth to what Winner calls the spiritual decline.⁷ Instead of referring to this phase of adult lives, Winner likes the idea behind the concept, ‘to sage’, which is to “try to shape the last years of one’s life with intention.”⁸

What is more central to Christianity than the concept of relational community? We are to live in communion with each other. This is the very heart and core of the Christian message. However, if we follow the Christian teachings about the church

⁵ Abraham Joshua Heschel quoted in *Lev. R. 25.5*, in commentary note for Lev. 19:32 in *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary*, ed. David L. Lieber, et al. (New York: The Jewish Publication Society), 700.

⁶ Lauren F. Winner, *Mudhouse Sabbath: An Invitation to a Life of Spiritual Discipline* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2003), 98.

⁷ Winner, *Mudhouse*, 99.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

community as family, church leaders and church members will be attentive to the concerns, issues, and needs of the church's elderly members, who only want to be treated with respect and dignity. Perhaps the organized church needs to revisit the Levitical legislation that commands disciples to honor, respect, and show appreciation for our elders.⁹

Thus, the message of Rev. Osborne's study is relatively simple: our aging seniors simply want someone to listen to them, to bring a smile to their faces, to give a few minutes of your time to enjoy their company. As Jesus told the first disciples, "This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you."¹⁰ "You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won't spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you."¹¹

⁹ Lev. 19: 32 (NIV).

¹⁰ John 15:12 The Message (TM).

¹¹ John 15:16 (TM).

APPENDIX A
SURVEYS

Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire

Primary Reference: Plante, T.G., & Boccaccini, M. (1997). The Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire. *Pastoral Psychology*, 45, 375-387

Please answer the following questions about religious faith using the scale below. Indicate the level of agreement (or disagreement) for each statement.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree

- _____ 1. My religious faith is extremely important to me.
- _____ 2. I pray daily.
- _____ 3. I look to my faith as a source of inspiration.
- _____ 4. I look to my faith as providing meaning and purpose in my life.
- _____ 5. I consider myself active in my faith or church.
- _____ 6. My faith is an important part of who I am as a person.
- _____ 7. My relationship with God is extremely important to me.
- _____ 8. I enjoy being around others who share my faith.
- _____ 9. I look to my faith as a source of comfort.
- _____ 10. My faith impacts many of my decisions.

To score, add the total scores. They will range from 10 (low faith) to 40 (high faith).

To review all of the studies using this scale, please consider searching with Google Scholar, PsychInfo, or other databases searches. Some of the articles that have been published on the scale include the following:

- Plante, T. G. (2010). The Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire: Assessing faith engagement in a brief and nondenominational manner. *Religions*, 1, 3-8.
- Freiheit, S. R., Sonstegard, K., Schmitt, A., & Vye, C. (2006). Religiosity and spirituality: A psychometric evaluation of the Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire. *Pastoral Psychoogy*, 55, 27 - 33.
- Plante, T.G., & Canchola, E.L. (2004). The association between strength of religious faith and coping with American terrorism regarding the events of September 11, 2001. *Pastoral Psychology*, 52, 269-278.
- Storch, E.A., Roberti, J.W., Bravata, E., & Storch, J.B. (2004). Psychometric Investigation of the Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire—Short-Form. *Pastoral Psychology*, 52, 479-483.
- Storch, E.A., Roberti, J.W., Bravata, E., & Storch, J.B. (2004). Strength of Religious Faith: A Comparison of Intercollegiate Athletes and Non-Athletes. *Pastoral Psychology*, 52, 485-489.

Spiritual Needs Inventory

C. Hermann, Ph.D., R.N.

This questionnaire contains 17 phrases that describe needs (activities, thought, or experiences) that some people have said they have during their illness. For some people these needs relate to the spiritual part of them. They define spiritual as that part of them that tries to find meaning and purpose in life. They believe a spiritual need is something they need or want in order to live their life fully. I am interested in finding out which of these needs you currently have and if you feel they are met in your life.

Directions: Read the need in column A. Then answer the questions in columns B and C before going on to the next need in Column A.

Column A	Column B				Column C	
	Please rate the items in the column below. For every item in Column B that you answer 2, 3, 4, or 5, please answer YES or NO in Column C.				Is this need being met in your life now?	
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	
In order to live my life fully, I need to:	1	2	3	4	5	
Sing/listen to inspirational music						Yes No
Laugh	1	2	3	4	5	Yes No
Read a religious text (for example: Bible, Koran, Old Testament)	1	2	3	4	5	Yes No
Be with family	1	2	3	4	5	Yes No
Be with friends	1	2	3	4	5	Yes No
Talk with someone about spiritual issues	1	2	3	4	5	Yes No

Column A	Column B Please rate the items in the column below. For every item in Column B that you answer 2, 3, 4, or 5, please answer YES or NO in Column C.					Column C Is this need being met in your life now?
In order to live my life fully, I need to:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	
Have information about family and friends	1	2	3	4	5	Yes No
Read inspirational materials	1	2	3	4	5	Yes No
Use inspirational materials (for Example repeating or living by phrases or poems)	1	2	3	4	5	Yes No
Be around children (own or others' children)	1	2	3	4	5	Yes No
Be with people who share my spiritual beliefs	1	2	3	4	5	Yes No
Pray	1	2	3	4	5	Yes No
Go to religious services	1	2	3	4	5	Yes No
Think happy thoughts	1	2	3	4	5	Yes No
Talk about day-to-day things	1	2	3	4	5	Yes No

Column A	Column B Please rate the items in the column below. For every item in Column B that you answer 2, 3, 4, or 5, please answer YES or NO in Column C.	Column C Is this need being met in your life now?
In order to live my life fully, I need to:	Never Always	
See smiles of others	1	
Use phrases from a religious text (for example: using phrases to guide you each day such as "Greater is He that is in me, than He that is in the world.")	1	
	2	Yes
	2	Yes
	3	No
	3	No
	4	
	4	
	5	
	5	

Other spiritual needs identified by the patient:

Interviewer_____

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION FORM AND CASE STUDIES

FINAL CONSENT FOR RESEARCH United Theological Seminary
Doctorate of Ministry Program

Student Field Research Project

Title of Project: Fruitful Faith in the Fragile Years

Principal Investigator: Ann M. Osborne

Participant's Printed Name: _____

This is a research study. Research studies include only people who want to take part. This form gives you information about this research, which will be discussed with you. It may contain words or procedures that you don't understand. Please ask questions about anything that is unclear to you. Discuss it with your family and friends and take your time to make your decision.

1. Purpose of the Research:

This research is being conducted to learn about how older, fragile, or home bound people experience faith, meaning and significance. No drugs or devices are involved; simply a series of survey questions at various periods during the research project. Approximately 10 people will be involved in the study.

2. Procedures to Follow:

- You will receive three visits from researchers in total. Today the researcher will ask you to sign this form to give permission and will give you two written surveys to answer. Two more visits will follow: one involving a 30 minute conversation wherein you will be asked three open-ended questions concerning times in your life when you experienced a sense of meaning and significance in your faith. From this conversation, the researcher will summarize the conversation in a brief written case response written in an anonymous and confidential manner. In the third visit, the researcher will ask you to listen as she reads to you the case response narrative. She will then ask, "Is this what you wanted me to hear?" A brief response period will occur. The participant will then receive a follow-up written survey to complete. At the end of the research period, the participant can request to receive copies of the case study and written response summary, if desired. It is hoped that the next visit will occur within two weeks from today and the third visit scheduled within four weeks from that visit.
- There are three interview questions that will be used at various points during the research project. You are free not to answer or to skip any questions that you choose not to answer.

2. Discomforts and Risks:

This research involves minimal risk, pain or discomfort. Questions are designed to explore your feelings. This might cause discomfort for some people not used to expressing their feelings.

4. Possible Benefits:

This research may provide possible benefits in allowing you to explore various practices in your life that involve faith development and growth. You may also identify ways to remain fruitful in your faith in the midst of the more fragile times of your life. You may also recognize a renewed sense of meaning and significance.

5. Other Options that Could be Used Instead of this Research:

You are free to decline to participate in this research. This is a voluntary study designed to explore the relationships between faith, meaning and significance.

6. Time Duration of the Procedures and Study:

The time commitment involves three visits of approximately forty-five minutes each of your time.

7. Statement of Confidentiality:

The research records that are reviewed, stored, and analyzed by the researcher for the Doctorate of Ministry Program of United Theological Seminary will be kept secured in a confidential field participant research file and marked as work product. The results of your conversations with the researcher will be coded with a random number rather than your name. This information will be kept in a locked file cabinet and destroyed after six months of the project's conclusion.

In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

7b. The Use of Private Health Information:

To participate in this research, you must allow the researcher to have access to limited information about your overall health situation. If you do not want us to engage you concerning protected health information, you may not participate in this research.

If you choose to participate, you are free to withdraw your permission for the use and sharing of your health information at any time. You must do this in writing. Write to Ann M. Osborne, Principle Investigator and let her know that you are withdrawing from the research study. Her mailing address is 500 E. Roseville Road, Lancaster, PA 17602. If you withdraw your permission:

- We will no longer use or share general medical information about you for this research study, except when the law allows us to do so.
- We are unable to take back anything we have already done or any information we have already shared with your permission.
- We may continue using and sharing the information obtained prior to your withdrawal if it is necessary for the soundness of the overall research.
- We will keep our records of the care that we provided to you as long as the law requires.

Representatives of the following people/groups within United Theological Seminary may use your health information as reported anonymously and confidentially coded and share it with other specific groups in connection with this research study.

- The Investigator—Ann Osborne
- The Final DMIN Examining Committee
- The United Theological Seminary's Institutional Review Board
- The United Theological Seminary's Human Subjects Protection Office

8. Costs for Participation:

There are no costs to the participant for participation in this research. You will not lose any legal rights by signing this form.

9. Compensation for Participation:

You will not receive any compensation for being in this research study.

10. Voluntary Participation:

Taking part in this research study is voluntary. If you choose to take part in this research, your major responsibilities will include to respond to a series of survey and interview questions that explore your feelings and your experience. You do not have to participate in this research. If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop at any time. If you decide not to participate or if you decide to stop taking part in the research at a later date, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

11. Contact Information for Questions or Concerns:

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant or you have concerns or general questions about the research or about your privacy and the use of your personal health information, contact the Doctorate of Ministry Faculty Research Advisor for the Spirituality and Aging Peer Group for Doctoral Studies, Dr. Peggy Garrison, 513-896-4583. You may also call this number if you cannot reach the researcher or wish to talk to someone else.

Signature and Consent/Permission to be in the Research:

Before making the decision regarding enrollment in this research you should have:

- Discussed this study with an investigator.
- Reviewed the information in this form.
- Had the opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

Your signature below means that you have received this information, have asked the questions you currently have about the research and those questions have been answered. You will receive a copy of the signed and dated form to keep for future reference.

Participant: By signing this consent form, you indicate that you are voluntarily choosing to take part in this research. (Signature of Participant's Legally Authorized Representative is required for people unable to give consent for themselves.)

Signature of Participant

Date

Time

Printed Name

Participant's Legally Authorized Representative: By signing below, you indicate that you give permission for the participant to take part in this research.

Signature of Participant's Legally
Authorized Representative

Date

Time

Printed Name

Description of the Legally Authorized Representative's Authority to Act for Participant

Person Explaining the Research: Your signature below means that you have explained the research to the participant/participant representative and have answered any questions he/she has about the research. (Only approved investigators for this research may explain the research and obtain informed consent.)

Signature of Person Explaining
the Research

Date

Time

Printed Name

Desire to Receive Copy of Summary Results:

Please send me a copy of the research results:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Case Study
Participant One-120911

Participant #120911 is a 91-year old man who served for 60 years as a Minister of Word and Sacrament for the Presbyterian Church USA. His wife died five years ago from ovarian cancer. He had served as her primary care-giver during the two years that she battled the disease. Two years ago #120911 had an ascending aortic aneurism (AAA) repaired which restored him to reasonably good health. He lives independently and continues to drive short distances, including to his church. Each Monday morning #120911 facilitates a Bible study at a nearby retirement community for about 25 residents. He currently suffers from Atrial Fibrillation which was treated by electrical cardioversion two weeks prior to the third feedback visit. He lives alone and does not want anyone to live with him or check up on him.

Participant #120911 values his privacy and his independence. He volunteered to participate in the study as he initially reported feeling no connection or having any ‘feeling’ of God’s presence in his life. He described this experience as being problematic in that he had no emotional sense or felt experience of God’s presence in his life.

120911 completed the pre-test and post test with scores of 36 and 36 respectively. He showed no change in strength of religious faith as a result of the intervention. Through responses to the Spiritual Needs Inventory, #120911 indicated that he sometimes needs to laugh, be with family and friends and to talk with someone about spiritual issues. He sometimes needs to go to religious services, talk about day-to-day things, and see the smiles of others. Frequently he uses inspirational materials, prays and listens to inspirational music. He always needs to read a religious text and have

information on family and friends. The only need that he reported that is not being met in his life is his inability to pray even though he ranked this as a frequent spiritual element needed in his life. Interestingly, his response to the interview questions explains this unmet need.

He reported the following responses to the three questions.

1. As you review your life experience, describe a time when you felt especially near or close to God.

“When I was a young boy, I was out in the country, all by myself. I knew—with a calm and confident sense of knowing that God was present in the beauty of the sky and the natural surroundings—the trees, the running brook, and the birds and squirrels. I had a real awareness of God being present through all of creation and all around me in nature. I have never had any strong sense of emotions or felt sense of God as some people have expressed that they experience. You might say that I am emotionally bereft, although I have never figured out exactly what caused this. I rather have a strong sense of trust that what scripture and others share about faith can be trusted. I can trust God, even if I have never felt an emotional awareness of God within me.”

2. At the present time, how would you describe your experience of God?

“Although I have spent my life serving God and helping other people learn more about God in their lives, right now I don’t feel anything about God. Every morning when I awaken I think, ‘ah, another day to walk with you, God!’ I experience God in everything. It is no longer that God is there and I am here. It is almost as though God infuses every aspect of my living. Each breath is filled with God. Each moment of my day is like a parable of God’s presence. When I try to pray, I don’t particularly feel anything. It seems like I show up, but God is all around me – in the air, in the light, in the space, in the beauty of the trees. God is everywhere, infusing all that there is! It is really pretty remarkable.”

3. Is there any advice you would provide to Pastors or Chaplains so they might better support you to stay fruitful in your faith during this fragile time of your life?

“Listen. Don’t use words. Be present in silence. Don’t ask us old people about our health unless you really, really want to know and you are really ready to stop for quite a while to actually hear us tell you how we feel. Respect those of us who are old and realize that we are in need of companionship and ministry of presence. Be genuine and authentic. Don’t try to tell us you know what we are feeling; you don’t! Pray for what we tell you about, not for what you think we want to hear!”

Feedback Session Response:

Participant #120911 listened carefully to what the researcher had recorded from his responses to the open-ended questions. The researcher observed a hint of a tear and the man took several deep breaths to retain his composure and emotional control as the researcher read what she had heard in the second visit. “You have heard me almost correctly,” he responded, when the researcher asked if she had heard what he wanted her to hear. “I want to add some things to make what you heard in question two and three more to the point of what I am feeling today.”

“You have described me as being much more integrated than I feel that I actually am at this point. Self-awareness is not something that is very high on my list, just now. I am at a point where I simply want to retreat into the back of a dark cave and chew on my bone – sort of like where Moses was when he retreated to the cave and waited for God to pass by him. Moses didn’t see the face of God, only his backside. I can only sense God’s presence right now in the shadows and in looking backwards in retrospect about where God has led me through the years. You characterize me as much more optimistic than I currently, today, am feeling. But you also need to know that every day is a discrete moment – some days are very good, others are very hard. Today it is very hard.”

“Regarding question three, when I was in the hospital our new Senior Pastor stopped by to see me. He didn’t stay long but in his brief presence and touch I experienced the reality of God’s grace. You know, presence is terribly important. Touch is also extremely important. The new pastor was able to convey an acceptance of me and where I am in life right now. He was interested in my welfare and in spending time simply sitting with me. That really means a lot. He stopped by without an appointment to visit when I returned home. There is integrity, a quality of valuing a person that some folks have and others simply don’t possess. No amount of training can teach it. It requires a lot of maturity on the part of the person to simply be with another without imposing words, judgment, criticism or advice. It is a kind of mystique – a care-giver or Minister either has it or doesn’t!”

“I don’t want someone to treat me as though I am a project. I am a person. Being treated as a unique and separate person is terribly, terribly important. I don’t want to be seen as a problem. I don’t want to be a ‘task’ on somebody’s agenda. I want to be loved and experienced as a human being with value and meaning and significance simply for who I am! When I am an ‘agenda item’ on someone’s calendar then part of the responsibility of the Minister or visitor is that they have to ‘do something’ to me or for me. Simply ‘being’ with someone means that one is present. When you are present with me, I experience myself as a person who matters to you! Pastor Ann, you are present with me. I value your ministry because you let me be who I am!”

Case Study
Participant Two #121611

Participant #121611 is an 89 year old man who lived his entire life in York, Pennsylvania and moved to a Lancaster continuing care retirement community at the urging of his daughter in March of 2011 along with his wife who had walking concerns. Participant #121611 worked first as an accountant in a public accounting firm and then became a lumber products broker, subsequently acquiring the company from the retiring owner becoming the owner-operator from his own home. A life-long member of a Lutheran Congregation close to his York residence, 121611 served as a Council leader and faithful congregant for his entire adult life. He is also attended Masons meetings with friends in York.

Participant #121611 described the move to Lancaster as being very difficult because he no longer is supported by his life-long friends, other Mason members, his priest and his church family. In July, 2011 his wife died unexpectedly. This newly widowed man has congestive heart failure and has been hospitalized recently for treatment. Between the first and second visits, #121611's family moved him from an independent living apartment to an assisted living apartment. Participant #121611 volunteered to participate in the study after learning about the project from his daughter.

Participant #121611 is interested in pursuits that provide meaning and significance. He would rather read "U.S. News & World Report" than a fictional novel. He has had difficulties connecting with other residents who only want to drink coffee

and gossip rather than engage in meaningful conversation and significant service to the larger world. This highly intellectual man experiences deep difficulties with believing in ‘life after death’ and the lack of scientific proof of the resurrection. He described an experience of feeling his wife’s warm touch upon his hand and a second time upon his arm during the depths of his grief and loneliness. This experience of a ‘felt presence’ of her from beyond the grave has caused him to grapple with his faith and his belief in an after-life.

121611 completed the pre- and post- tests with scores of 36 and 36, respectively. He showed no change in strength of religious faith as a result of the intervention. Through responses to the Spiritual Needs Inventory, #121611 indicated that he sometimes needs to listen to inspirational music, read a religious text, and use phrases from a religious text for guidance. Frequently he needs to laugh, be with friends and talk with someone about spiritual issues, read inspirational materials, be with people who share his spiritual beliefs, think happy thoughts, talk about day to day things and see the smiles of others. He always needs to have information about family and friends, pray, go to religious services, and be with family. He reported having all of the needs as being met in his life at this time.

He reported the following responses to the three questions.

1. As you review your life experience, describe a time when you felt especially near or close to God.

“I always had the sense of God’s presence and activity in creation when I experienced the beauty of the spring flowers and the vivid colors and remarkable variety of the colors of green as shrubs, trees and grasses began blooming in the early spring following the hard winters. In the fall, when the leaves of the trees turned their glorious colors – the hues of reds, oranges, yellows, and purples, I knew that God was present in the world around me.”

“When my son was born, I realized that God existed. I prayed that God would help me to be a good father to my son. I had a sense of how God must love me when I tried to love my son. There was one time when I had to discipline my son for something that he had done, that I knew how he felt, and I didn’t want to discipline him because he was justified. My wife wanted me to discipline him, though. I had to walk away without saying anything. He had gotten into a fight with a bad guy and punched him out. My son was justified because the guy was really a bad kid. I just had to walk away from my son. I couldn’t discipline him. I loved him so much, and I would have done the same thing.”

2. At the present time, how would you describe your experience of God? Do you feel near or far away from God?

“I feel far away from God, right now. I don’t understand how God could take my wife from me, right now when I need her so much. I guess I should have planned ahead for this time. My wife and I were really happy, we had a nice home, a nice life, good friends, everything going on as though things would always be OK. We were content in our home. I could never live a week of Saturdays; I need to be productive. I guess I should have planned for this more. I know my wife is here. I have had the times of feeling her touch me when I am just waking up. There is a warmth on my hand or on my arm. Do you think I’m crazy? I’m afraid to tell my pastor for fear he will think there is something wrong with me!”

“With my daughter Judy, I know that God intervened in her health situation. She was 13 when she had a heart operation which gave her a new life. She was born with a bad heart situation. She was one of the first children to go on the heart lung machine at University of Penn. I never expected her to live so long – why she’s now in her 60s! She was healed and has lived a normal life.

3. Is there any advice you would provide to Pastors or Chaplains so they might better support you to stay fruitful in your faith during this fragile time of your life?

“It is too bad that Sundays are no longer dedicated to activities at church. Families should worship together. There shouldn’t be sports on Sunday that make families have to miss church. Children and teens should be in Sunday School and learn about God.”

“Also, we should all be more truthful in our life dealings with each other. People shouldn’t lie to each other but tell the truth to folks about what is happening and what is going on.”

“I know God is there, I know my wife is here with me. I have felt her touch me. It is a mystery to me how this can be! Sometimes I think I’m going crazy when I feel her nearby. What do you think, Pastor Ann? Do you think that she is really here and that I am really feeling her when I feel that warm touch?”

Feedback Session Response:

Participant #121611 was very attentive as the researcher read what she had recorded from his initial responses to the open-ended questions. It seemed to the researcher as she observed the man that he was working hard to not become emotionally responsive to what he was hearing her read.

“Wow, you are really pretty good!” he responded, when the researcher asked if she had heard what he wanted her to hear. “I think what you heard me say needs to get moved around though,” he said.

“I want you to know that I felt and knew that God was with me and my daughter when she was so ill as a child. That information needs to get moved from the second question to the first question. It is important that you don’t overlook what I said about my daughter over what I said about my son! She is well and still caring for me, even now...why she’s in her mid-sixties, I think. Who would have expected that, with her heart condition? Her type of operation was life changing for her and for me!”

Then the man began to digress in his thought process, commenting on recent newspaper articles about child abuse, the lack of marital fidelity being displayed by political candidates, community leaders and state government officials. He returned to the theme he had discussed in the first visit about how family values were breaking down American culture and the decline in church attendance. After about ten minutes of listening, the researcher redirected the conversation to obtaining additional responses to the three questions.

“Ministers should try to walk in our shoes to help us solve our problems,” observed the man. It is important that the care-giver or Pastor try to analyze and realize where each older person is coming from. Everyone is different. Just as children are different, no two people are alike. One size does not fit all when it comes to listening and being with us older people. Try to realize what we are dealing with—all the aging and loss issues—what we think about and what our life is like. That would be what I would add.”

Case Study
Participant Three #010512

Participant #010512 is a 79 year old woman who served as Director of Elementary Education and Pre-K for the Lampeter Strasburg School District. She served on the Manheim Township School Board for many years. In August, 2011 she had to move her husband of 58 years from their home to an assisted living facility because of his health care requirements. For the past seven months she has faithfully visited him each day and also assumed all of the roles and responsibilities of total life that her husband had always accomplished. Her husband had so cared for her that for the three years that she studied for her Doctorate of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, her husband would pick her up from the school and drive her into Philadelphia where he would patiently wait while she completed her doctoral classes. He strongly supported her as she completed the library research and writing of the dissertation so she could complete an Ed.D.

Participant #010512 is an active member of Highland Church having served as an Elder several times, most recently as the chair of the Church Nominating Committee and a Pastor Liaison on the Personnel Committee. She also served as an active member of the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry until her husband's health needs caused her to resign from that role. While she cared for her husband, Participant #010512 also trained as a Stephen Minister and cared for a widow whom was experiencing memory loss concerns due to grief related to the unexpected death of her husband. Participant #010512 volunteered to participate in the study as she reported feeling a need to support the researcher in her field experience as she remembered having to conduct

field research for her own dissertation. She described her sense of God's presence as "the only thing that gets her through each day as she offers support to her husband, whose memory is quite limited."

Between the three weeks separating the second and third visits, this woman sold her home of forty years, sorted, gave away much of her household belongings and packed the remaining possessions, moving to a two bedroom independent living apartment in the same continuing care retirement community where her husband is located. When the researcher arrived at the new abode, she was amazed to see that the woman was completely moved in, with all items unpacked from the boxes and everything carefully arranged as though the woman had been living there for years!

Participant #010512 completed the pre-test and post tests with scores of 38 and 39 respectively. She showed a one point change in strength of religious faith as a result of the intervention. Through responses to the Spiritual Needs Inventory, #010512 indicated that she sometimes listens to inspirational music and uses phrases from religious texts for guidance. Her need for using phrases from a religious text for guidance is not currently being met in her life. She frequently reads a religious text, talks with someone about spiritual issues, uses inspirational materials, needs to be around children and be with people who share her spiritual beliefs. Two of these needs, being around children and using inspirational materials, are not being met at this time in her life. She reports that she always needs to have information about family and friends, read inspirational materials, pray, go to religious services, think happy thoughts, talk about day-to-day things, laugh, be with family, be with friends and see the smiles of others.

Participant #010512 reported the following responses to the three questions.

(Within five hours of the researcher's arrival for the second interview, 010512 had fallen on the pavement after leaving her heart physician's office suffering facial injuries that required her being put in an ambulance, transported to the ER and having been returned home by a helpful neighbor. She was unwilling to cancel the field interview, because she so strongly felt the need to support the field research project.)

1. As you review your life experience, describe a time when you felt especially near or close to God.

"I have always had a close connection in my faith in God. When I got married at 21, I knew that God was present and a part of my life with Paul. As I raised my family, there were many times when my prayers to God about my family and my children's care and nurture were answered. In our marriage, we had our ups and downs, as any couple does, but God was with us and I knew God was working in our lives. When my parents died, I had a real sense that God was with me, helping me through the pain and grief of losing them."

2. At the present time, how would you describe your experience of God? Do you feel near or far away from God?

"It is only with God's help that I have been able to cope with the past three years of Paul's continuing decline and his increasing lack of awareness and ability to remember and grasp the world around him. I am so excited that I will be moving on March 13 to live in an apartment in the same continuing care retirement community and will only be a couple of hallways away from him. It has been so hard to drive and to live here by myself. I am in the midst of sorting and packing a lifetime of living here in this house. I am grateful for my family and my friends who are helping me go through all the stuff and figure out what I am to take and what my children will receive and what I will sell. God is giving me strength and support every day. Today, I know that God was with me in that I didn't really hurt myself. I fell on my nose and my chin, but didn't even break my teeth or cut the inside of my lip. My nose and face are bruised, I will look like a raccoon tomorrow, but God protected me so I didn't hurt anything. I didn't even hurt my new replacement shoulder or any of my bones. God is so good. God protected me from a serious injury!"

3. Is there any advice you would provide to Pastors or Chaplains so they might better support you to stay fruitful in your faith during this fragile time of your life?

"When Ministers visit people like me who are older, they need to stop and be present with us. I remember when my mother was older, she used to complain that the young ministers were in such a hurry to get in and out that they didn't seem really present with her or aware of her needs. The minister seemed almost afraid of spending too

much time with her because he was uncomfortable being around someone old. They should train ministers in seminary to listen, to be empathetic and to be genuinely authentic as people. They shouldn't force emotions that they don't have! When we were trained as Stephen Ministers we were taught that the most important thing we could do was to just sit and be present with our care-receiver. Listening is more important than talking. Being genuine and authentic is more important than faking emotions that the minister doesn't really have! Pastor Ann, you know how to listen. The young ministers need to learn what you have learned about how to sit and be present and 'be' with people.

Feedback Session Response:

Participant #010512 listened very carefully as the researcher read what she had heard the woman say at the second visit in response to the open-ended questions. The woman began to dissolve into tears, getting up and crossing the room to get a box of Kleenex.

"I cannot believe that you heard my information so exactly," she exclaimed. I think you heard exactly what I wanted you to hear. I am so very grateful that you are my pastor and that you have been so supportive to me during this difficult time of supporting my husband. I am so grateful to finally have moved into this new location so that I no longer have to drive twenty miles a day to provide care to my husband. You heard exactly what I wanted you to hear about me and my situation! I have nothing to change or add."

Case Study
Participant Four #011012

Participant #011012 is an 84 year old woman who has been active during the past five years organizing and leading bus trips for the retired members of Highland Church. She was trained as an occupational therapist and worked in several hospitals before starting her family and serving as a full-time mom of three children. In August, 2011 she learned that her 51 year old son was battling severe health concerns resulting from alcoholism, a disease he had hidden from his family of origin but known to his wife of ten years. Despite attempts for rehab, he refused treatment, dying in early October.

Since that time, this long-time widow has struggled with grief and loss, as well as her own minor health concerns related to osteoporosis and back pain. She learned one week prior to the researcher's third visit that her 35 year old daughter has stage three non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. Her late spouse, a psychologist, died twenty-eight years ago. Participant#011012 moved into an independent living apartment at a continuing care retirement community four years ago. Although she still drives, she was asked in January by the tour company for whom she has worked for the past 18 years, to retire from leading bus tours. This created a sense of despair and a struggle within her regarding her sense of meaning and significance. The researcher invited 011012 to participate in the study because of the fragility of her situation and the grief and loss she is experiencing related to her children and her full-time employment.

Participant #011012 completed the pre-test and post tests with scores of 35 and 37 respectively. She showed a two point change in strength of religious faith as a result

of the intervention. Through responses to the Spiritual Needs Inventory, #011012 indicated that she sometimes needs to sing/listen to inspirational music, laugh and read a religious text, have information about family and friends, be around children, and use religious phrases to offer guidance. She reported that her need for laughter, receiving information about family and friends and being around children are not currently being met. Frequently participant #011012 needs to read inspirational materials, use inspirational materials, be around people who share her spiritual beliefs, pray, go to religious services, think happy thoughts and talk about day to day things and see the smiles of others. Four of these frequent needs are not being met at present: be with family, be with friends, think happy thoughts, and talk about day to day things. She indicated the stress of dealing with her grief and sadness are keeping her from being able to meet these needs currently.

She reported the following responses to the three questions.

1. As you review your life experience, describe a time when you felt especially near or close to God.

“Although not raised in a Christian home, I was invited to Sunday School and Church as a child in western Oklahoma during the depression. When I attended college I was active in a Christian group and grew in my faith in God as I related with the other college students. I experienced God as someone I could talk to when I needed support or relationship. When I married a Jew, my family was upset, even though they didn’t have faith in God. I attended Temple and raised my children as Jews. I learned a lot about God while attending with my family. When my husband died, I returned to Christianity and joined Highland Church, because I like being Presbyterian.”

2. At the present time, how would you describe your experience of God? Do you feel near or far away from God?

“Now, I feel very close to God, even as I grieve my son and his dying so young. Dan didn’t take care of himself. I think that your behavior brings consequences. I do not believe in a vicious God. It wasn’t helpful when the Catholic Sister at the hospital told me, “Oh, it is God’s will that Dan might die!” I prayed when David was very sick as a

child. He was born sickly and had an inability to thrive early on. I remember praying to God, “If David will live, I will pray every day to you! And I have! God is close to me and walks with me each day, giving me strength to get through all the difficulties. You know, within 18 months, David was well – fat and chubby and happy! My praying has continued—throughout my whole life. I believe God answers prayers. God walks with me and supports me in everything.”

3. Is there any advice you would provide to Pastors or Chaplains so they might better support you to stay fruitful in your faith during this fragile time of your life?

“It is really important for Ministers to support people like me when we are going through difficult times. The other people in the church also support me. Just a phone call or a brief visit is enough! Do you know that one lady called and offered to drive me to the grief support group one night because she was concerned about me driving in the dark in the wet and cold weather? Now that is genuine care and concern. It is important that the ministers stay in relationship with the people. Ministers need to be genuinely concerned about me as a person; not just to show up and offer inauthentic words and then move on – spending time, being present with people is really important. Some of the younger ministers don’t realize how important it is to be authentic, to be genuine. It would also be nice to have someone call me to check on me. Not just to schedule a time to visit or take me somewhere, but just to have someone to check in with and to chat – just to see how I’m doing!”

(It should be noted that the researcher consistently contacts this woman twice each week by telephone or personal visit to make sure that she feels supported and cared for!)

Feedback Session Response:

Participant #011012 listened very carefully to what the researcher read what she had recorded from the second visit in response to the open-ended questions. The woman started to sob. The researcher got up from her chair and went over to the woman and knelt beside her, asking permission to touch the crying woman on the arm. The participant continued to cry until she was spent, then reached over to the window sill for a tissue.

“You heard me correctly when you listened to my responses. I just need you to correct a couple of details. My mother saw to it that we went to Baptist Sunday School every Sunday. It seemed important to her that we learned about faith, even though she never ever went with us. I liked going to Sunday School and Church so I stayed with it

through my teens and as a young adult. I felt comfortable and safe. Church was safe. I felt content in God's love when I was in the church building. It was a haven of sorts from the rest of the world that I faced alone as a child and a teenager."

"The thing I would like to add to the third question is this. I think it would be really helpful to older people, not just me, but the rest of the congregation, if the Senior Pastor would send a note to acknowledge or respond that he is aware that my son died. It seems like if you get a note from the 'Chief Mahuff' that it might feel like you mattered in the church. That isn't to say that your visits, Rev. Osborne, aren't helpful. They are. But you aren't the top dog! If the top dog cared, well, maybe I might feel more like I mattered, somehow! Maybe you could pass this message along to him."

Case Study
Participant Five #011312-A

Participant 011312-A is a 91 year old woman who has been a member of Highland Church for the past twenty years. She was raised Catholic but left her faith to marry the love of her life who was a member of the Reformed Church. She defied her very Italian Catholic family from New Jersey who didn't want her to marry a Protestant. She and her husband have been married for 63 years. For the past nine years they have lived in an independent apartment at a continuing care retirement facility. Five years ago 011312A was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, but was treated with chemo and is in remission. She has been active in a women's bible study facilitated by a trained Christ Care leader and Stephen Minister who has led the ecumenical group for almost 4 years. She has grown in her faith and sense of God's presence through her participation in this group. Although she is currently cancer free, 011312-A recognizes that she is slowing down and she values being able to come to worship services on Sunday mornings, even though she and her husband rarely go out at night. 011312-A volunteered to participate in the study at the researcher's invitation because she believed it is important to help young ministers learn how to better support older people as they live into their later years.

Participant 011312-A completed the pre-test and post test with scores of 35 and 29, respectively. She showed an uncharacteristic six point decline in the strength of religious faith as a result of the intervention. The researcher had to provide direction three times so as to assist the woman in understanding the task of completing the instrument. Even then, it seemed as though this participant was having some cognitive

difficulty processing the statements of the instrument and responding to them. The same experience happened in the administration of the second instrument. The woman was directed three times by the researcher as to how to complete the inventory. Even then, the woman failed to respond to the assessment as to whether the needs expressed were currently being met. It appeared as though Participant 011312-A was experiencing difficulty in processing the cognitive information being asked of her.

When the statistician looked at the mean scores of the pre and post test responses of all the participants and heard the researcher's account of the difficulties that this participant experienced in completing both instruments, the statistician suggested that the statistical response data of this person be excluded from the sample as there seemed to be some anomalies involved with this particular test individual. "Perhaps she was having a bad day or series of bad days," he said. "In any case, whatever is happening is inconsistent with the rest of the participants' who were assessed by the instrument."

After also experiencing significant difficulties in completing the second instrument, the participant's response to the Spiritual Needs Inventory, indicated that she sometimes needs to be with friends, to talk with someone about spiritual issues, to go to religious services and to think happy thoughts, and see the smiles of others. The only need that was unmet in her life was her need to talk with someone about spiritual issues. She reported two frequent needs: to be with family and to pray. Both of these needs are being met. This participant was the only one of the ten who answered five responses in the never category. She had no responses in the always category.

She reported the following responses to the three questions.

1. As you review your life experience, describe a time when you felt especially near or close to God.

“Of course when I was struggling about the decision to marry my husband I prayed to God for guidance. My decision meant I would have to leave the Catholic Church because the priest told me I couldn’t be Catholic and marry outside of the church. My family was very angry at me and disowned me for many years. When I was forty, I was diagnosed with colon cancer. I had children at home at the time and I couldn’t imagine how I could take care of them and also be sick with cancer. The doctors told me I would have to have a colostomy and live the rest of my life with a bag outside my body. I simply couldn’t imagine living like that. I prayed to God for healing and God healed me completely. I didn’t have to have a colostomy and I was completely healed of all the cancer.”

2. At the present time, how would you describe your experience of God? Do you feel near or far away from God?

“Five years ago I was diagnosed with non-lymphatic Hodgkin’s disease. I wanted to die. I didn’t want to have chemo and radiation and be so sick. I decided that I would just die. But my husband talked me out of that and encouraged me to have the chemo and radiation. I was completely healed. I know that God is present in my life. I pray to God every day. God is a present help for all the things I experience in my life.”

3. Is there any advice you would provide to Pastors or Chaplains so they might better support you to stay fruitful in your faith during this fragile time of your life?

As ministers work with older people they need to listen. They need to be genuine and relate to us as individual people. We need to have a relationship. It is not so much how much time or the length of the visit, but that the relationship is genuine and authentic. So many younger ministers seem uncomfortable around older people. We are no different. A two minute visit that is genuine and empathetic is sufficient. Our chaplain here is a great example. He stops by for 2 minute visits, asks us how we are doing and prays with us. He isn’t fake. He takes the time to support us in prayer and genuine concern and relationship. He is present with us – not in a hurry to get to the next place. Being in relationship with him makes people feel honored, accepted and related to in a very real and meaningful way. We matter. We have meaning and significance as individuals and as God’s beloved children.”

Feedback Session Response:

Participant #011312 was extremely focused in listening as the researcher read what she had heard the woman say in the second visit open-ended interview session.

This participant never made eye contact with the researcher, looking away through the entire recounting of what the researcher heard.

“Yes. You heard what I said,” responded Participant #011312. “I have nothing to add. Just that you got some of the initial information about us wrong. We have been married for 63 years – you said 66 years. You did great in hearing us. I’m glad that you come to visit us on a regular basis. Thanks for including us in your project.”

Case Study
Participant 6 #011312-B

Participant #011312-B is a 90 year old man who has been a member a Highland Church for twenty years. He was raised in Lancaster County and grew up in the German Reformed Church. He and his wife were married in the church. They have been married 66 years. He began his career in the Coast Guard and then entered the Navy. He and his wife lived a number of places before returning to Lancaster County. They have lived in a continuing care retirement community for fifteen years. 011312-B has served on the resident board of the community and has been active in its leadership and decision-making. The researcher invited 011312-B to participate in the study following a regular pastoral visit. He and his wife are entering into their nineties. Both expressed that they are beginning to slow down and are not as eager to get out of their apartment to do things. They are still able to drive to church on days when the weather is good.

011312-B completed the pre-test and post test with scores of 40 and 40, respectively. He showed no change in strength of religious faith as a result of the intervention. Through responses to the Spiritual Needs Inventory, #011312-B indicated that he sometimes needs to be with family, to be with friends and to talk with someone about spiritual issues. These needs are all currently being met. He frequently needs to sing or listen to inspirational music, have information about family and friends, be with people who share his spiritual beliefs, think happy thoughts and use phrases from religious texts to offer guidance. These needs are currently being met. He always needs

to see the smiles of others, talk about day to day things, go to religious services, pray, read and use inspirational materials, read religious texts and laugh. These needs are also currently being met in his life.

He reported the following responses to the three questions.

1. As you review your life experience, describe a time when you felt especially near or close to God.

“When I was in the Coast Guard, I had an opportunity in 1941 to apply to the Navy Flight Training program to become a pilot. I prayed to God that he would help me get into the program. It was very competitive. The training was in southern California. I remember being at the top of the Coast Guard ship when I looked out over the water. I had just learned that I had been accepted into the Flight Training program. I felt a very strong sense of God’s presence and was assured of God’s purpose for my life. I entered the program and trained as I pilot. I was transferred to the south Pacific and served there until the war ended. I decided that I didn’t want to continue a career in the Navy so I resigned my commission and entered civilian life, getting married and having a family and a full-time career. I knew God was a part of my life and he has been with me my entire life.”

2. At the present time, how would you describe your experience of God? Do you feel near or far away from God?

“Shortly after I retired from my career, I was diagnosed at age 68 with prostate cancer. I prayed to God for guidance as to what to do. I decided that God was telling me to have the surgery to remove my prostate. The surgery was successful and I was healed of the prostate cancer. I know that God was guiding my decisions and healed me of the cancer. I have a sense of God’s presence with me in every part of my life as I live my life.”

3. Is there any advice you would provide to Pastors or Chaplains so they might better support you to stay fruitful in your faith during this fragile time of your life?

“It is really important for young ministers to learn how to visit older people. Relationship is extremely important. I was sad when a former pastor at Highland never visited us. He just didn’t have time. When he greeted us on Sunday mornings he wasn’t very genuine. He seemed to be very inauthentic and uncomfortable talking with us because we were older. I am grateful that you come to visit us. Our chaplain here knows how to visit. He may only stop in for a couple of minutes but he is concerned about us. He prays with us about our needs and our concerns. He is very relational and understands how to be present with us. Sometimes he doesn’t say anything. He just comes and hangs out with us! He doesn’t make light of our needs and our concerns but takes us seriously and treats us with respect and honors us as true children of God.”

Feedback Session Response:

Participant #011312-B listened very carefully to what the researcher read that she had recorded from the second visit in response to the open-ended questions. The man maintained very good eye contact and nodded as the researcher read what she had heard him say.

“I don’t remember the church being a German Reformed Church. I think it was just reformed!” Also, we have been married 63 years, not 66! And we have lived here nine years not fifteen. Also, I ride my bike in good weather. I also swim! Since 1982 and 2011 I have swum 2000 miles, total! I am an income tax volunteer for the VITA program. It keeps me busy this time of the year!”

“You heard what I said very well. Just to correct a couple of the details of my story. I started training in Connecticut, but went to Pensacola, Florida for flight training. I was transferred to Southern California, where I was stationed when the Second World War ended.”

“Also, our Chaplain here at the retirement community always comes in our door, looking for a big hug! He likes to hug us, and we like it too! I found this devotion that I wrote that I’d like you to include in the case study write up. I think it explains how God has been active in my life and my son’s life. Here’s a copy!”

Case Study
Participant 7 #022712

Participant #022712 is a 94 year old woman who grew up in Indiana, PA but has lived in the community since 1937 when she married her husband of sixty-three years. For the past ten years she has lived in a continuing care retirement community, first in an independent living setting and now in an assisted living setting as she undergoes rehab for a recently broken hip. Although raised as a Presbyterian, she joined the Lutheran Church so as to worship with her husband because there was no Presbyterian Church in the community. In September she suffered a stroke and in December she broke her hip. She hopes to return to her apartment in three weeks when her rehab is completed. Participant # 022712 volunteered to participate in the study as she is presently unable to get out of her homebound setting because of her fragile health situation. She is a close friend and neighbor of an active Highland member who recommended that she be invited to participate in the study. This alert and highly engaging woman reports that she participates in many Highland activities and worship experiences when her friend brings her.

Participant #022712 completed the pre-test and post test with scores of 30 and 35, respectively. She showed a five point change in strength of religious faith as a result of the intervention. Through responses to the Spiritual Needs Inventory, #022712 indicated that she sometimes needs to sing or listen to inspirational music, read inspirational materials and use inspirational materials, to talk with someone about spiritual issues and use phrases from a religious text for guidance. Currently her need

to read and use inspirational materials and to talk with someone about spiritual issues is not being met. She frequently needs to be around children but this need is not being met at this time. She also frequently needs to be with people who share her spiritual beliefs, to laugh, to read religious texts, go to religious services and think happy thoughts. These needs are being met. She always needs to have information about her family and friends, to pray, to see the smiles of others, to be with family and to be with friends. These needs are currently being met in her life.

She reported the following responses to the three questions.

1. As you review your life experience, describe a time when you felt especially near or close to God.

“There are two times that stand out vividly in my mind as I think about my life. When I was a teenager, one night I woke up out of a deep sleep. I sensed God in my room with me. It was a knowing beyond a shadow of any doubt. God exists. I knew at that moment that God was with me and would always be a part of my life.

The second experience was when I was a young married woman. My Aunt Tilley lived in San Francisco. One day we received a call from her neighbor that Aunt Tilley was in the hospital and that a family member needed to go to help out. My mom couldn't go as she was taking care of my sick dad. I was elected as the family representative. I had never gone on an airplane but I got on the plane and arrived at the San Francisco Airport. I took a cab to my aunt's house. There I went through her papers and found the name of her attorney. I called him and he told me he would help me out; that I had a big job to do in a short amount of time. I wasn't good with directions at all. The neighbor gave me verbal directions and somehow I was able to remember them and follow them, getting to the hospital all by myself in my aunt's car without ever getting lost! That was God's work! Meanwhile, the lawyer called the banker. The banker met me at the hospital. We got my aunt to sign the necessary papers so that we could transfer her money and her power of attorney to me. Between the doctor, the lawyer and the banker and me the arrangements were made to get my aunt on a plane back to Pennsylvania where my family could care for her. God even provided a cracker jack of a nurse who accompanied me with my aunt and all her IV tubing on the plane and to Pennsylvania. We moved my Aunt Tilley into this very retirement center. At that time it was the only skilled nursing care facility in all of Lancaster County. God was the mover and shaker behind the scenes. I knew that all of the help I had came from God. God was very, very close to me during that whole experience!”

2. At the present time, how would you describe your experience of God? Do you feel near or far away from God?

“I am very close to God. I rely on God’s presence with me each and every day. About ten years ago my son was diagnosed with Mabry Cell Cancer, stage 4. He was only 55 years old. He was getting progressively sicker. We asked that he be put on prayer chains all over the country. All my family and friends were praying for his recovery. Then we learned about a special experimental trial for a new drug at Johns Hopkins. He was accepted into the clinical trial. The medications worked. But it was really God’s leading and guidance through the power of prayer that brought complete healing to my son, through the medical support at Johns Hopkins. My son is completely healed and is alive today. In fact, he is now the one helping to care for me!

Right now, though I am having a really tough time of it. I have been diagnosed with bone spurs at the site of my new hip replacement. I am in so much pain that I can’t move and I can no longer do the rehab I’m here to do. I feel really useless – I can’t get out of the chair, I can’t walk without extreme pain, and whenever I move I am overwhelmed with pain. I feel sort of hopeless, just now. God is present with me, I’m just not really sure that I’m too valuable or meaningful to God right now. I never thought I’d be in this position. I have worked hard to stay healthy and to exercise and to do all the right things so that I wouldn’t end up frail and unable to walk...now look at me! What am I going to do with myself? Do you think God cares about me?”

3. Is there any advice you would provide to Pastors or Chaplains so they might better support you to stay fruitful in your faith during this fragile time of your life

“Listen. Be present. Stop rushing around and simply sit and visit with folks. Let people who are old like me be the ones to talk. Pastors don’t seem to understand that the best thing they can do is just be with us and let us share what is happening in our lives. And to share how we feel or don’t feel about God.

One of the reasons I was interested in being a part of your study, Ann, is that I want to help some of the younger ministers who are coming along to understand that it is vitally important to listen to people. Not to talk. Just to listen!

Thank you for listening to me. You know how to listen. You have proved it through our visits. Thanks so much for including me in this research project! Thanks, too for listening to me when I complain about this pain. It really isn’t any fun. I’m not too sure what to do next!”

Feedback Session Response:

Participant #022712 listened solemnly as the researcher read what she had heard the woman say at the second visit in response to the open-ended questions. The woman

maintained good eye contact, smiling as she heard her stories being recounted by the researcher.

“Amazing! You heard me, even the sadness, and despair of how it feels to be so helpless, to just have to sit here day after day. I am eager to get a second opinion about my hip. With my daughter arriving this weekend, maybe she can help me get to Hershey Medical Center to talk to them to see if anything can be done. I’m too young to simply sit here and stare off into space! God needs me to do something still! Thanks for listening and caring enough to hear what I was saying—beyond the words and into the depths of my heart!”

Case Study
Participant 8 #022812

Participant #022812 is a 98 year young man who lived most of his life in Corning, New York where he supervised PhD Chemists and other researchers for Corning Glass Company. He grew up in Philadelphia and received an MBA from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has been married twice. His first marriage was for 33 years and his wife died. He married his second wife and had 33 years of marriage with her. The two of them moved to Lancaster County fifteen years ago, living in a cottage at the continuing care retirement community. His wife died nine years ago, shortly after they moved into the apartment where he has lived for ten years now. He and his wife began attending Highland fifteen years ago when they moved here. He is a life long Presbyterian and served as a Deacon and an Elder at the Corning Presbyterian Church. Recently he gave up driving so he is now dependent upon others to get him to church. He is mentally alert and extremely interested in theology. He will turn 99 in June. The researcher invited him to participate in this study as he is homebound and is in his late nineties. Of all the participants, this man seems to possess the qualities and characteristics of *transcendence*, as described by Joan Erikson.

Participant # 022812 completed the pre-test and post tests with scores of 31 and 35 respectively. He showed a four point change in strength of religious faith as a result of the intervention. Through responses to the Spiritual Needs Inventory, #022812 indicated that he sometimes needs to sing or listen to inspirational music, be with

family, be with friends, have information about family and friends, be with people who share his spiritual beliefs, and go to religious services. All of these needs are currently being met in his life. He frequently needs to laugh, pray, talk about day to day things and see the smiles of others. The only one of these needs that is not being met is to be able to talk about day to day things. He always needs to think happy thoughts and this is currently happening in his life. He reports rarely needing to read a religious text, talk to someone about a spiritual need, read inspirational materials and be around children. He is not able to be around children in his current setting. The one need he never has is to use inspirational materials such as poems or phrases.

He reported the following responses to the three questions.

1. As you review your life experience, describe a time when you felt especially near or close to God.

“I always felt the closest to God when I was in the church in a worship service. I never really had a ‘felt’ sense of God’s nearness; it was more of a solid knowing that God exists. I never really had a need to question this. I was raised as a life long Presbyterian. We understand God’s abiding presence. It isn’t so much what I do but what God is doing in my life and the world around me. It is hard to explain to people other than people who understand what grace and God’s love is all about. God is the actor – I am the receiver of what God does in my life.”

“God was with me when my wife was ill. We were married for 33 years and we moved to this retirement center where we lived in the cottage. My wife moved with me to this apartment where I cared for her during that last year of her life. God gave me the strength and peace that I needed as I cared for her and walked with her during that final stage of her life here in this place. I know she is now with God.”

2. At the present time, how would you describe your experience of God? Do you feel near or far away?

“I know God is with me. I don’t really ‘feel’ God as much as I rely and trust God is doing what needs to be done. I do not fear death. I’m ready to be done in this place. I’ve lived a good life; I made choices – some good, some not so good. I don’t worry about what will happen after I die. That’s up to God. It will be wonderful to see what actually happens! Maybe death is an end and we just go to sleep and never wake up...if that is

the case, I'm really ready to sleep! Maybe there is another place we go to where we are with God in a whole new reality. I can deal with that too! It is really hard for me to think that I will be reunited with people from this place – what happens with two wives? Whatever happens, I am ready to go from here. I have had a really good life. I'm ready, whenever God is!"

"People have the choice for how they live their lives. They can spend their time worrying about the future, and what happens when they die and whether they can control how they will age and experience good or bad health. Or people can put their trust in God – knowing that God will take care of all the problems and challenges of life. That is the way I live. Why worry about things I cannot control? One day, actually one moment is all we have. We only have the present moment to live and to fully experience God's love and presence. So that is how I live. I try to make good choices, knowing sometimes I will goof up. But God is with me, walking through each moment of my life! So why worry about it?"

3. Is there any advice you would provide to Pastors or Chaplains so they might better support you to stay fruitful in your faith during this fragile time of your life?

"Young people have absolutely no idea how it feels to be old. It isn't something that they can learn or be taught. What they can learn is to shut up and listen. Who was it? Augustine, I think, who said, Be a good witness to God – if you absolutely have to, use words – but use them sparingly.

I think listening and caring for people is the most important thing a Chaplain or Pastor can do for me. The rest is up to God and to me! God has given me a sound mind so that I can make the right choices for what I need and can do in my life."

Feedback Session Response:

Participant #022812 listened very carefully as the researcher read what she had heard the man say at the second visit in response to the open-ended questions. The man maintained good eye contact with the researcher and had a calm and happy demeanor as he listened to what the researcher had heard him recount in the second visit.

"Yep! Rev. Ann. You got it! You listen very well. I think you heard exactly what I wanted to have you hear me say! I think that God is what is most important about who we are and how we live our lives. Most folks get so involved in the details of the material world that they fail to realize how quick life can pass. Ultimately, all we have is relationship with God. It is exciting for me to live each and every day with God. Thanks for including me in your study!"

Case Study
Participant 9 #022912

Participant # 022912 is a 76 year old woman who has been a long-time member of Highland Church. She has a degenerative nerve and bone condition which causes her to be in constant pain despite having recently completely several very complicated back surgeries. Upon learning of the research study, 022912 requested to be a participant. She laughingly observed that she had heard that the individuals who had initially been on the researcher's list to be interviewed had all died. She told the researcher, "I really am ready to die and go to be with God, so if I am a research subject, maybe God will answer my prayer at take me to heaven very soon!" Participant #022912 has been married for 47 years to a former military chaplain who served with service people in Korea and Viet Nam and in the first Gulf War. He later served as an Associate Pastor in Florida and Pennsylvania. Participant #022912 rarely has the opportunity to be by herself as she is the constant caregiver and companion for her husband. His obsessive need to control her and all aspects of her life has created significant stress for her. The only time she finds for herself is on Wednesday mornings when she attends the Quilter Group, serving as their resident prayer warrior. She met with the researcher during the quilter meeting when she could be alone to share her responses to the interview process.

Participant #022912 completed the pre-test and post-test with scores of 32 and 32, respectively. She showed no change in strength of religious faith as a result of the intervention. Through responses to the Spiritual Needs Inventory, #022912 indicated that she sometimes needs to be with family, be with friends, talk with someone about spiritual issues and read inspirational materials. Her need to be with family is not being

met currently. She frequently needs to listen to or sing inspirational music, laugh, read religious texts, have information about family and friends, be with people who share her spiritual beliefs, pray, go to religious services, think happy thoughts and talk about day to day things and see the smiles of others. Her frequent need to sing or listen to inspirational music is not currently being met. She had three other needs that she rarely needed: to use phrases from religious texts to guide her, to use inspirational materials and to be around children. These needs are all currently being met.

She reported the following responses to the three questions.

1. As you review your life experience, describe a time when you felt especially near or close to God.

“My husband was a military chaplain and I would always come to live here in Lancaster when he was away on an overseas duty tour. He was on in the field with the troops in Korea, Viet Nam and Desert Storm. I prayed for him, knowing that he was the only guy there who didn’t carry a weapon (other than his two burly body guards). God was with me each time he was away. I knew that God was present with me. I felt God’s presence through the people here at Highland who supported me in small groups, in prayer circles and in relationship with me and our children while my husband was overseas.

2. At the present time, how would you describe your experience of God? Do you feel near or far away from God?

“I feel like God has abandoned me or is, perhaps, mad at me!” I don’t feel God with me at all. My whole body is falling apart and I am in so much pain that I can’t ‘do’ anything. My effort to come here today will put me in bed all afternoon and most of tomorrow in order to recover from the energy required to be up and about. But I can’t sleep all day. I need a life! I wonder if God is so far from me because I can no longer physically do anything for God. Do you think that’s true?”

“I wanted to be a part of your study because I heard that some of the people that you wanted to talk with ended up dying. I want to go and be with God now because my life here is so very, very difficult! I don’t want to leave my husband by himself because he, too, struggles with many health issues. But I have no quality of life. I simply exist in pain. I don’t feel God’s presence with me at all, even know I believe He is here beside me.

3. Is there any advice you would provide to Pastors or Chaplains so they might better support you to stay fruitful in your faith during this fragile time of your life?

“Be present with people. You don’t even have to say anything. Learn how to be with people so that they know you care. So many people, pastors included, are fake. They don’t really care about the people who they are with. They make small talk, but they don’t really want to hear what is actually going on with us. Getting older is really tough. Pain is hard. Young pastors sometimes make jokes or belittle us older people because they do not understand what we are going through.”

“Stop in for visits...or even just call to check up on folks. Long visits aren’t necessary. Care and love the members of the congregation. Pay attention to their needs. Listen rather than talk.”

Feedback Session Response:

Participant #022912 listened very carefully to what the researcher read that she had recorded from the second visit in response to the open-ended questions. The woman began tearing up as she listened to the researcher recite her answers from the second visit. The woman quickly got herself under control and focused upon correcting some discrepancies in the descriptive data the researcher had recorded.

Question 1

“My husband served as a Chaplain after the Korean War ended. He was there during 1964-65. He was a military Chaplain stateside and also served in Viet Nam for the entire time of the conflict.”

Question 2

“I don’t feel like God has actually abandoned me – at least not today! I simply don’t think I am on God’s front burner any more. At the moment I don’t feel close to God. I don’t feel that God is with me all the time or that I am able to hear God’s message because of my quality of life. I have not left him. In my heart I know that he hasn’t left...I just don’t feel like God pays much attention to me!”

Question 3

“You heard exactly what I was trying to say. Rev. Osborne, you are an excellent listener!”

Case Study
Participant 10 #031312

Participant #031312 is an 89 year old man who lived in Philadelphia. He worked as a tool and die maker, first for Yankee Tools and then for Martin Tools where he retired. He was married twice. He has three daughters and a step son. He has been living in an assisted living apartment for the past ten years. He has a leg injury which prevents him from walking unless he wears a brace. Recently the brace has rubbed his leg in such a way that it hurts too much to wear it. He stays in his room, only going out when his family is able to wheel him around in a wheel chair. He grew up as a Presbyterian, going to St. Ambrose Church in Philadelphia. He married a Catholic woman so he also attended church with her while she was alive. His step son, Dick, visits him each Wednesday morning and gives him great care. His grand-children come on Sunday afternoons to visit. He has eight grandchildren who care for him and bring him paintings and drawings to brighten his room. His step daughter in law, Dick's wife, is a staff member at Highland Church. She recommended to him that he participate in the study as he fits the requirements of the research project. He is living in a fragile place. He cannot see very well because of macular degeneration. He cannot hear real well because his hearing aids are broken and in the shop. He cannot write so the researcher asked him the questions verbally and recorded his answers for him.

Participant #031312 completed the pre- and post tests with scores of 31 and 34, respectively. He showed a three point increase in strength of religious faith as a result of the intervention. Through responses to the Spiritual Needs Inventory, #031312 indicated that he sometimes needs to talk with someone about spiritual issues and wants to be

with people who share his spiritual beliefs. He frequently needs to read inspirational materials and be with family. He never needs to read religious texts and this need is not being met in his life. He needs to always to laugh, to be with friends, to have information about family and friends, to use inspirational materials, to be around children, to pray, to think happy thoughts and to talk about day-to-day things, to see the smiles of others and the use phrases from religious texts for guidance. He is unable to read religious texts as he cannot see due to being nearly blind.

He reported the following responses to the three questions.

1. As you review your life experience, describe a time when you felt especially near or close to God.

“I always felt near to God when I went to church. God was in the church. I worshipped God at Church.”

2. At the present time, how would you describe your experience of God? Do you feel near or far away from God?

“Because I can’t get to church anymore, I don’t have the same feeling of being close to God. I am a very private person so I pray to God in the silence of my room and my heart. I watch TV and see the church services on television and this helps.”

“I really feel most close to God when I am at church. Since I can’t get to church, how I experience God is really hard. I do it privately. I don’t mind you praying with me, but I really am a private person, so I talk to God within me.”

3. Is there any advice you would provide to Pastors or Chaplains so they might better support you to stay fruitful in your faith during this fragile time of your life?

“I don’t have any real recommendations since I can’t get out to go to church because the brace hurts my leg. I like going to church but my health restricts my getting to go out of my room.”

“It is really nice when the Chaplain or the Pastor comes to visit me. I like visits. I feel cared for and valued when a Minister comes to see me and just sits with me and listens to me talk. It is hard for me to hear others so sometimes, if the Minister would just come and be with me – not say too much, since I can’t really hear anyway – just your coming is really, really helpful. Just to be with me. “

Feedback Session Response:

Participant #031312 listened very carefully to what the researcher read that she had recorded from the second visit in response to his answers to the open-ended questions.

“You heard exactly what I said. I have nothing more to add. My life is pretty much summed up in what you heard me say. That’s it!”

APPENDIX C
CONFERENCE PLANNING RESOURCES

Ann M. Osborne, 12/18/08

PROCESS THEOLOGY AN ADVENTURE OF IDEAS

Preamble

Process theology is one of the most creative movements in contemporary theology. While many contemporary theologians are thinking small and speak of Christian faith primarily in terms of narrow faith narratives, process theology still seeks to respond to the “big questions” (God, Christ, cosmology) related to theological reflection. While embracing the insights of post-modernism, contemporary science, literature, medicine, and pluralism, process theology seeks to be faithful to the life-transforming message of Christian faith.

In this course, you will be invited to “live” process theology. I believe that theology is meant to be a lived enterprise, integrating in heart, mind, and hands. At its best theology involves a holistic interplay of vision, promise, and practice. Accordingly, we will reflect critically on the process vision of reality (God, human life, nature, and non-human world) and basic doctrines and practices of Christianity (salvation, Christology, the Holy Spirit, church and the world, sacraments, time and history). We will also “practice process” by focusing on certain spiritual practices (imaginative prayer, spiritual affirmations, prayer with the senses, holy touch) as a way of experiencing the wisdom of process theology. The course project consist of 2/3 of the course—relating process theology to an area in theology, ritual, practice, social transformation, etc. Your project may involve a combination of written and other media as well as a traditional written project.

My Course Project Summary

My DMIN thesis relates to a continuing observation that “long-term faithful Christians who are in their fragile and frail aging years (85+) are entering significant crisis of faith and as they age, many question and lose hope that all they have been taught about the Christian faith can really be trusted and relied upon as they face the dying process.” I hope to develop a collection of “resources” to assist these sharp-minded but frail and fragile elders to remain “fruitful and fulfilled” as they enter this valley of faith testing.

My project for the Process Theology Class thus involves having developed and recently used liturgical resources including prayers, homilies and services of witness to the resurrection that employ the “process lens” to engage with the Triune God. These will be used as part of the compendium of resources provided for “Fruitful Faith in the Fragile Years,” when it is published.

Process Theology Project Bibliography

Baylor, Lavon. *Taught By Love: Worship Resources for Year A*. Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1998.

_____. *Led By Love: Worship Resources for Year B*. Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1996.

Fike, Earle W., Jr. *Please Pray with Me*. Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1990.

National Council of Churches. *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. Nashville, TN: World Publishing Co., 1997.

Pearson, Roy. *Prayers for All Occasions For Pastors and Lay Leaders*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1990.

Peterson, Eugene. *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002.

“The Theology and Worship Ministry Unit.” *Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Book of Common Worship*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993.

Prayers

Prayers for Public Events:

1. Invocation for Silent Samaritan Luncheon (Dec. 1, Willow Valley Resort, PA):

Gracious and Loving One present in all Time and Space.

You prepare a feast for each of us. You issue the invitation to us. There is so little required of us to experience the joy of your welcome table, yet so much in the one thing we must do in order to find our place. We must choose to be at the Table. We must RSVP with our life and our commitments to be Your servant people.

Thank you for these Your silent Samaritans. From many different ways we come to be here: from office and store, from service and non-profits, from campus and hospital from the open road, retirement, and home. In many different minds, we come to support those who have no one to support them. We come to care for women who need the guidance of others as they walk their own unique journeys.

We pray for those who carry the burden of loss or bewilderment. We pray for women without resources and those for whom life seems especially despairing. Let our minds and hearts to do what is necessary to dwell with them in solidarity and support. Spur

our hands and feet to do for them what you would have us do. We pray for those about to face some sorrow unforeseen, some bereavement unexpected, some temptation unannounced. Walk with them through the valley of the shadow. Enable us to provide the resources necessary so that comfort and encouragement are available for their journeys. We pray for the young, that they may not grow old in bitterness; we pray for those of middle years, that they may be supported in their need; for those in their older years, that they may find security and peace.

Bless our time here together, we pray. Let this food nurture our bodies. Let our fellowship strengthen our resolve. Let our relationship together as Your Silent Samaritans sustain the ministry and mission of the Samaritan Center as it moves forward into the call You have to support women without advocates. We are Your beloved children in whom You delight. Refresh us now in Your grace and creative energy. Amen.

2. Prayer of Dedication of Sanctuary (Nov. 16, Highland Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, PA):

Creator God, you initiate new beginnings in our lives. In the days ahead there will be opportunities to give our energies to the cause of peace. There will be occasions to show love of neighbor. There will be moments to model kindness and thoughtfulness. There will be new openings to work for justice; there will be chances to offer compassion and nurture. The newness and fruitfulness of life is here for our living. We do not want to pass unseeing and unresponsive any such new opportunities. Save us, O God, from automatic fear and resistance of new responses. Keep us from anxiety over new requirements. Open us to good changes.

Fifty years ago, You called people to initiate new beginnings here on this high ground we know as Highland Church. You have faithfully blessed the ministry and mission of this community of faith who have dedicated their lives to Jesus Christ. God of New Opportunities, this morning, we dedicate the newness and change that we see and feel all around us as we worship in this renovated sanctuary. May this physical space enable us to worship You in spirit and in truth. Open us to Your creative and imaginative energy as we grow in faith and discipleship. Let our lives reflect Your best intentions for our lives. May we remember that it is You we worship, not the structures, and walls of this space, but You as Triune Lord of all Life.

We ask Your blessing and comfort on all who walk in difficult places today: those who are far from home; those who are ill, folks who grieve losses, families challenged by broken relationships or economic hardships. Bring Your healing light of love and goodness into all hearts to strengthen, encourage and enlighten. Create in us hope and expectation for the newness and opportunities You will bring this week. We pray together the prayer of all disciples...Our Father.

Pastoral Prayers:

1. Third Sunday of Advent:

O HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL:

We want to receive the true meaning of this Advent Season. Your coming to us was something deeply earthly minded. You invested in our world by coming as one of us—as a limited, finite human person to be One with Us. Immanuel—God with Us—show us how to love. Let our voices join others throughout the world who sing expectant songs of Your coming among us. Let our joyful songs be filled with the noise and laughter of delight and wonder as we share peace and good will with all whom we meet.

We remember those among us who have special needs. Those facing dangerous diseases; people grieving the loss of job, family member, significant relationship, treasured pet, or difficult time of transition; those living with unknown futures; people who wish their lives would be less complicated and more simple; folks who are afraid to move forward because they do not know which direction to go. Strengthen and support each one, O God of all Life, Bless our leaders as they discern the coming new opportunities and directions for our nation, our Commonwealth, our community, our church, our Pastoral Search Committee and our Permanent Nominating Committee. Bring the health and wholeness that You intend for us. We pray together the prayer You gave to all disciples...Our Father.

2. Sunday Prior to Thanksgiving:

GRACIOUS AND LOVING GOD OF ALL THAT IS. We give you thanks for calling such gifted and unique individuals as we are to join together to grow in discipleship and knowledge in our relationship with You. It is the season of Thanksgiving yet we admit that we struggle with singing praise and thanksgiving to You.

The external world seems to be unraveling at its very seams. We know people who are unemployed, neighbors facing critical financial uncertainties, and folks who worry about pension portfolios, mortgage payments, rising food and energy costs, and declining energy and physical well-being. Earthquakes, fires, wars, piracy on the high seas and injustices of all kinds shake our sense of security and safety. You, who calm the storms of all life, restore in us Your peace, so we may encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all, refusing to repay evil for evil. You, who delight in each of us as Your unique and novel creations, You urge us to do good to all people whom we encounter.

God of Abundant Life, You call us to place our trust in You. You ask us to place our discouraged spirits into Your hands—and to use the energy and confidence we have in You to engage our lives in significant actions that benefit and bring nurture and hope to each other.

God of all Relationships. You desire us to repair and renew the fractured connections that are so vital to us. You call us to give affection and mercy during times of disenchantment and despair. When trust is something which used to be, when comfortable love has turned to bitter disappointment, O God, You remind us of Your strong love and care for us. Help us to refuse to give up while there are still ways to apologize; to work, to rebuild, to forgive. We desire to live together in community as Your people holding fast to that which is good, acceptable and congruent with the complete wholeness of Your best intentions for our lives. Transform our minds and hearts as we relate to each other. Let us remember that You are the source and reason for all of life. We pray together the Prayer that You gave all disciples...Our Father.

3. 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time:

Loving God, we come before you today in amazement and astonishment for how you continue to work in our world on a daily basis. We see the bright colors of the changing leaves and harvested fields. We experience the excitement of our children as they learn new things in school. We appreciate the historic events that have occurred in our nation this week as a record number of Americans—young, old, and in-between—claimed their right as free people to vote their choices for leadership and policy decisions.

Healing God, we ask you to hear our prayers for individuals among us who need special care, people facing serious surgery and illness and folks in the midst of uncertainty and pain who await test results. We pray for the quiet unknown suffering and brokenness and disenchantment which hides behind our own everyday faces. We face relationships which need mending; things said which need forgiveness; choices which need direction; loved ones who need support. Bless each one who reaches out for strength and wisdom.

Discerning God, continue to uphold our Pastoral Search Committee with Your wisdom and gifts of discernment. Give them harmony in their searching and decision-making process and patience and confidence that You are leading them in the discovery of the Sr. Pastor for Highland whom You are in the midst of calling.

Creator God, bless us with new experiences of joy and excitement. We know you are strength in time of trouble, but you also give us a strong basis on which to laugh, sing and praise and give thanks. When we are blessed with a smile of pleasure; when we are baptized with healthy laughter, when we are anointed with some kiss of love; give us grace to say so and enjoy it. When we are touched by generous deeds; warmed by affectionate hugs; made at home by acceptance; feel good about a successful project, give us grace to say so and enjoy it.

We pray together the Prayer of all disciples...Our Father.

4. 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time:

Gracious and Loving God, You are present with us here, now, as we worship and praise You. You desire to enter the hungry places of our hearts, wanting to convince us of Your deep abiding love.

O God, You are the One who invites us constantly to choose life, even when our world and sometimes our own inner places, tastes of death, pain and weariness. It is You, Creator God, who become our spiritual nourishment, inviting us to yearn for truth and to grow from its treasures.

Lord Jesus, You who walked this earth and know our deepest human emotions and needs, we ask You to bless all who seek Your healing touch on their lives; those who seek to meet the basic needs of food, shelter and employment; people in ill health and folks with chronic disease; individuals who have no family support or are without caring friends; persons who mourn and grieve because of death, broken relationships, aging and life transition. We pray for the hundreds of thousands in our world who suffer from the aftermath of war, natural disasters, terrorism, and oppression.

You gift us with the bread of life abundant. Let your bread strengthen us during tough times. Let us break bread together and share with each other the gifts of hospitality and community. Transform our lives, binding us together in forgiveness and love that we may extend Your love to all with whom we connect.

We pray together the Prayer You gave to all disciples...Our Father.

Prayers of Invocation:

1. We look for signs of Your gracious presence among us, O God! Open our eyes to the wonder and mystery of Your gifts of Love and Grace. Let us worship You this morning so we may welcome You fully into our lives. Amen.
2. You keep surprising us, Gracious God. As we settle into our comfortable routines, You offer us a transforming birth. We focus on greatness; You appear in humble circumstances among ordinary people in everyday places. Amid the noise of our busyness, angel songs penetrate our unfocused awareness, inviting us to listen again. O God, let us hear the good news that You intend for us as we worship together. Amen.
3. Wondrous God, you are present in all times and all places; capture our attention in this space of worship. Open our eyes to see the wonders You provide. Awaken our generosity and sense of justice that we may be inspired to helpful action. Let us worship together in Spirit and in Truth. Amen.

4. Gracious and loving God, we gather here to worship and praise you. Focus us so that we may engage your Word within our hearts and live our lives in response to Your love for us. Make your dwelling place with us here. Amen.
5. Be present among us, O God, for we need your assurance and blessing. We praise You that You give us strength to do what is right and just as Your expression of relatedness in our world. We want to be certain that our decisions and actions are in keeping with Your best intentions and to be confident that You are present in the midst of all life. Forgive us for all that we have done or left undone that does not express Your full wholeness and desire. Let us be open to all You are revealing to us now as You guide our steps into the future and lure us into deeper relationship with You. We pray, In Jesus' name. Amen
6. Come Among Us, Amazing God to enliven our spirits as we worship together. You are among us all, a living God, present in ways we have not yet realized. Mold us, Change us, give us courage and energy to live by Your power. We engage in joyous worship, confident of Your direction for our lives. Amen.
7. You gather us, O God, to worship You. You are our Center and Source of life. We trust You in all things. Guide us, strengthen us and renew us with Your joy. Amen.

Call to Confession:

1. We have all fallen short of God's best intentions for our lives. Let us join in our corporate prayer of confession.
2. God invites us to join together in right relationship with each other and with God. We join as a community of faith in our prayer of confession.
3. Let us confess our sins together as the Community of Believers in Jesus, the Christ.
4. God knows us and loves us as we truly are. Let us join together to open our deepest selves to God's transformation through our confession together as the Body of Christ.
5. God desires to remove all that is unhealthy from our lives so that we might recognize our true worth as God's children. Let us seek God's healing as we join in prayer together.

Assurance of Forgiveness:

1. L: God's glory waits to burst into the midst of all who accept the good news!
Friends, believe the good news of the Gospel.
P: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.
2. L: The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us for lives

that are self-controlled, upright, and godly. Jesus Christ has come to us a God's gift. Friends, believe the good news of the Gospel:

P: In Jesus Christ, we are reconciled to Eternal God.

3. God is even now nudging us gently, caring tenderly for us amid all that we experience. The favor of God is upon us, entrusting us with the Gospel for our own lives and for the world. Receive forgiveness and blessing as the good news! In Jesus Christ, Our Sins are Forgiven!
4. God offers us a presence we have not recognized, nurture, and compassion we often ignore and grace we do not serve. Let us rejoice in God's amazing generosity, opening our lives to the gifts of God that we will share them with others!
5. God gathers us together as God's very own beloved! God's steadfast love endures forever. This is the good news of the Gospel. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!
6. God offers reconciliation and brings us into covenant relationship. Our lives will know joy and our voices will be filled with laughter. God is faithful and gives peace and comfort. Friends, believe the good news of the Gospel. In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!

Confessions of Faith:

1. Let us join together in a Confession of Faith written by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bend, in heaven and on earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5-11
2. Let us join together in a Confession of Faith written by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Church in Colossi. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. Colossians 1:15-20
3. Let us join together in a modern Confession of Faith created by the United Church

of Canada and known as The New Creed. We are not alone. We live in God's world. We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Holy Spirit. We trust in God. We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence, to live with respect in Creation, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope. In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

Homilies

1. For use with Children or the Very Aged:

Bring basket with maps and Magellan GPS Mobile Device or Cell Phone with GPS.

Do you know what a plan is? Have you ever been in the car with your parents/adult children when they've pulled the map out to figure out where to go? Perhaps, your car has one of these satellite positioning systems which can figure out where you are and then tell you how to get to the next place you want to go.

Sometimes, the direct route or plan we have doesn't work out just exactly like we think. We have to go to a 'plan B'.

Do you know what a plan B is?

Do you think that God has a plan B? I think that God delights in each of us exactly as we are and as God has made us with our special gifts and talents. Sometimes we use our gifts in one way. Sometimes we use our talents in another way. Sometimes God helps us use our talents and gifts in ways that we never ever planned. I guess we might call that using God's Plan B.

As you go off to Sunday school this morning, I'd like you to think about how you might use the talents and special gifts that God has given to you in a different way than you might have ordinarily used them. Sometimes, we can be very surprised at how God uses something that we don't think very much of to move us into places where we learn new things and respond in different ways. So as you meet your school friends/neighbors this week, think about how you might have a Plan B and how you can be thankful for using your gifts in new and different ways.

Let us pray a quick prayer.

2. For Use as Memorial Homily for a person with Long-term Illness:

Today we gather to celebrate the intrepid life of (name) as one of the finest human beings we may have ever known.

Name probably had (her/his) own ideas about how this memorial service should be conducted. I stopped by to see (her/him) a couple of months ago to see what he might desire in a service and what hymns were his favorites. By that time, (she/he) was sleeping a lot and said things fairly succinctly. When I asked if (she/he) had any favorite scriptures, (her/his) reply was “Yes!” When I then followed up with, “What are they?” (she/he) replied, “I like them all!”

I know that (name), as his friends at (retirement community/friends) called him, loved the (activity that person most loved). Prior to (her/his) confinement to (her/his) (room, wheelchair, motorized chair, etc.), (she/he) used to go (activity) with (special friend, family member, connected care-taker). (She/He) enjoyed not only (activity) but was an avid (other passions). (Tell the specific story about the person) as an example: Beginning first with a bright orange mo-ped, Fred one day came home with a 500cc motorcycle in the exact same bright orange color. When a friend asked why he had kept the same color, he joked, “I’m hoping that Maryanne won’t notice that it has changed. However, when he came home talking about purchasing a 1000cc water cooled Honda motorcycle, Maryanne said, “absolutely not!”

By the time I met (name), (she/he) had learned the art of “sitting still.” Confined to a (bed, chair, room) for the past (number of) years, (name), focused on relationships with family and friends, (specific activities, i.e. jigsaw puzzles), and looked forward to (specific activities of person, i.e. playing ‘bingo’) with (her/his) friends. Plastered across the walls of his room were pictures of all of (her/his) family members. (Name) had a great love for (her/his) family, most particularly (specific names like spouse and number of years married, etc.). They were (specific details of his life, ie. high school sweethearts who have lived their lives together.)

Being still is not an easy art to learn. The prophet Isaiah says, “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength. (Is 30:15)” (Name) spent many of (her/his) last months in the quietness of (her/his) room. Yet (she/he) enjoyed the laughter and love of friends and family and of (her/his) caregivers at the (location of care). (Name) put (her/his) trust in God. In (her/his) quietness and (her/his) trusting faith, (she/he) was strong, even though (her/his) body was weak.

As a beloved child of God, (name) learned the secret of an abundant life expressed in the Psalms, “Be Still and Know that I AM God.” (Name) knew this great truth. (name) knew that in the stillness and quiet (she/he) could Know that God was in relationship with (her/her) and integrated in all aspects of life that (name) lived. (name) now has abundant and eternal life with God; living in all wholeness and energy.

The great I AM God offers us this same abundant and eternal life. In the Great I AM of God’s love, we have access to all of the Love, Joy, Peace, Strength, Power and Healing, Humility and Patience we need to live out our lives faithfully as God’s children. (Name) discovered the great secret—to be still and know that God IS.

May we all learn from (name) example and life that as Children of Creator God, we are loved beyond all measure and given abundant life. As God calls to us, we respond in a continual conversation of relatedness. May we learn to appreciate and master, as (name) did over these past years, the art of sitting still and relying upon God to walk ahead of us luring us into all of the choices, challenges and opportunities and responses of life. Amen.

3. A Service of Witness to the Resurrection:

Greeting:

Welcome to (name of place of service). We are gathered together this morning for a service of Witness to the Resurrection and to celebrate the life of (full name of deceased) as God's beloved and special child. (Name) was born on (birth date) and joined the Church Triumphant on (death date) to live eternally with God and in communion with the Saints of God—this great cloud of faithful Christians who bear witness to us of the hope and glory we have in and through God's great love for us.

The eternal God is our dwelling place; underneath us are God's everlasting arms. These arms enfold us as we grieve the loss of (name) here with us in this place. God's great love enfolds each of us as we both mourn and celebrate (name) life.

The Apostle Paul, in Romans 8:38-39 talked about God's love in this way:
 "I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Prayer:

Gracious and loving God, You have created us to live our lives with you. You know our needs before we ask. Support us now as we face the mystery of death we may be upheld by the sure certainty of your great love for us.

We celebrate the life that (name) lived as your special child. We celebrate the wonderful person that (she/he) is. We are grateful that we had the opportunity to be part of (her/his) life. Comfort and give peace to each of us as we mourn (her/his) not being here with us. Let us remember with joy and gladness the special times of being with (name), your beloved one.

These things we ask, in Jesus Name. Amen.

Prayer of Comfort and Peace:

Awesome God, by your creative power you gave us life. In your redeeming love you have given us new life in Christ. In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ, we commend (name) to your gracious and loving

care. Let us take comfort in knowing that You walk ahead of each of us, guiding and caring for us beyond our greatest imagination. Lead us by Your Holy Spirit, to live in response to Your great love and best intentions for us. Let us respond to You in love, faithfulness and service to all whom we meet. We ask You to give us the confidence of a living faith, the strength of our sure hope in You so that we may live with joy, even as we grieve (name) life here among us in this place. O Lord, grant (name) life eternal with You, letting Your perpetual light of love shine upon (her/him). In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Blessing:

Go now in peace and comfort to remember, grieve, and celebrate together the life and memories you hold dear of (name) with you as (wife/husband), (mother/father), (grandmother/grandfather), (sister/brother) and friend. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

4. A Graveside Liturgy:

Opening:

We are gathered together this morning to commit (name) to God's eternal care and keeping. (Name) was born on (Birth date) and joined the Church Triumphant on (death date) to live eternally with God and in communion with the Saints of God—this great cloud of faithful Christians who bear witness to us of the hope and glory we have in and through God's great love for us.

Scriptures:

Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."

In his letter to the Church in Rome, the Apostle Paul tells the Church: "If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's."

Jesus came and lived among us so that we might have Life and that we will have it more abundantly. Abundant life, in overflowing measure is given to us. Eternal life flows through (name) now, animating (her/his) whole being. There is no more sickness or pain. (Name) is whole and healthy living in God's eternal light and love. Jesus gives us Love and Joy; Peace and Strength; Power and Healing; Humility and Patience; and Comfort and Endurance to bear the loss of our beloved friend and (sister/brother), (name).

Commitment:

In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to Creator God our beloved (sister/brother) (name) and commit (her/his) body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, says the Spirit. They rest from their labors and their works follow them.

Lord's Prayer:

And now, with the confidence of being God's beloved Children let us pray the prayer that Jesus gave to all disciples:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Prayer:

Let us pray: Gracious and loving God, You whose days are without end;

Help us always to remember how limited we are as human being and our brief our life here in this place is in comparison with the life of relationship we have with You eternally.

Let us take comfort in knowing that You walk ahead of each of us, guiding and caring for us beyond our greatest imagination.

Lead us by Your Holy Spirit, to live in response to Your great love and best intentions for us. Let us respond to You in love, faithfulness and service to all whom we meet. We ask You to give us the confidence of a living faith, the strength of our sure hope in You so that we may live with joy, even as we grieve (name) life here among us in this place. O Lord, grant (name) life eternal with You, letting Your perpetual light of love shine upon (her/him). In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Blessing:

Go now in peace and comfort to remember, grieve, and celebrate together as a family the life and memories you hold dear of (name) with you as (wife/husband), (mother/father), (grandmother/grandfather), (sister/brother) and friend. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

APPENDIX D

PHOTOCOPIED CONFERENCE PLANNING RESOURCES

SPEAKERS:	Feb.	March	April	May
Confirm	x			
Letter: Needs (AV), thumbnail Description of persons, of content;	x 2/28			
Accommodations, allergies		x		
Travel schedule			x	
Handout needs			x	
Honorarium				x
Thank you				x

FACILITIES:

Reserve on HPC Calendar	x			
HPC approvals	x			
Arrange setup with Steve			x	
Breakout rooms?		x		
Maps, bathrooms, AC, Parking			x	

BUDGET/REGISTRATION:

Develop budget	x			
Set regis fees / process /payment		x		
Scholarships		x		
System to receive handle registration		x		
Name tags			x	

PRINT MATERIALS:

Determine title, dates, dedication	x			
Draft flyer / brochure	x			
Approval for flyer		x		
PRINT		x		
Mail / distribution list		x		
Mail costs		x		
Mail distribution		x		

HOSPITALITY:

Arrange coffee/lunch, paper Products		x		
Clear with Holly		x		

HANDOUTS/PACKETS

x

[180]

BUDGET (attendees)	75	100	125	150
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EXPENSES:

Keynote Speaker (\$550)

Other Speakers (\$600)

Flyers

Design (\$100)

Print (\$200)

Handouts (\$100)

Ctrpcs/Décor (\$50)

Postage (\$50)

TOTAL (2008)

Nonvariable (\$1671)

Coffee / Lunch (\$6-10pp)	\$750	1000	1250	1500
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Total Variable and Non-var	\$2421	\$2671	\$2900	\$3150
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Income (@\$25)	\$1875	\$2500	\$3125	\$3750
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Letter to Program Participants:

We are so excited that you have agreed to work with us in leading the upcoming workshop.

TITLE

On Saturday, May 5, 2012, at Highland Presbyterian Church, from 9 am to 1 pm. In order to publicize the event, we need the following from you:

Formal name (and titles):

Prefer to be called:

Address, contact info:

Suggested title for your presentation:

Mini-description of what you'll cover:

Handouts—we'll make copies if received by April 27.

Special equipment (a/v, etc.) required:

You'll provide:

We'll provide:

Special room setup:

Honorarium:

We hope you will stay in the home of one of our members: Any special requests about accommodations (no stairs, dietary, allergies, etc.)?

Date and time you plan to arrive in Lancaster (realize this may change):

Date and time you plan to leave Lancaster:

Number of publicity flyers you'd like to distribute in advance:

Any other needs, suggestions, etc.:

In general, we anticipate the following schedule:

9-9:30 Coffee and Registration

9:30-10:30 Keynote Address

Session A (attendees will choose 2)

Session B (45 mins. Each?)

Session C

Session D

Luncheon
Closing Speaker

We anticipate our audience will be approximately 100 people, including Stephen Ministers, Deacons, Caregivers, Seniors, etc.

The Senior Life Institute of Highland Presbyterian Church presents:

CELEBRATE: LOVE, LEGACY, LAUGHTER

May 5, 2012

Highland Presbyterian Church

9:00 – 9:20

Coffee and Registration

Resource Tables open in the Narthex all day

9:30

Welcome

Doug Good

Speaker Introductions

Rev. Dr. Peggy Garrison

9:30 - 10:15

Enriched Living at the Three-Quarter Mark

Richard L. Haid, PhD, Adult Mentor/Coach

10:15 – 11:15

Remembering your Story as Legacy

Richard Morgan, PhD, Author of *Remembering Your Story*

BREAK

11:30 – 12:30

Keeping Secrets, Telling Secrets: Moving Toward
Wellness

Emma J. Justes, PhD, Author of *Hearing Beyond the Words*

12:30 - 12:50

LUNCH: Blessing Rev. Dr. Peggy Garrison

12:50 - 2:00

Preacher Dennis the Storyteller: Stories from the
Okefenokee Swamp

Dennis E. Stalvey, MDiv. Professional humorist

With special thanks to these program Sponsors:

Homestead Village---*enhanced senior living*

Lancaster Theological Seminary—*educating and strengthening Christian leaders*

Plum Street Gourmet—*catering for your special occasion*

Stauffers of Kissel Hill—*We delight shoppers!*

Restrooms are located in the corridor at the back of Fellowship Hall and in a second
corridor off the Narthex beyond the Welcome Center.

Quilters display in Room 202.

Today's Box Lunches are catered by

The Plum Street Gourmet Shoppe

Each box contains one half sandwich, a small Caesar salad, a piece of fruit, and a home-baked cookie.

Sandwich selections are:

Smoked TURKEY with dilled Havarti, lettuce and tomato, on Country bread

Albacore TUNA with lettuce and tomato, on French bread

Smoked HAM and Swiss cheese with lettuce and tomato, on Swiss bread

Chunky CHICKEN salad with lettuce and tomato, on multi-grain bread

Roast BEEF with horsey sauce, carrot, on marble rye

VEGGIE—Hummus, cukes, tomato, shredded carrot, on French bread

When you are finished with your lunch, please separate the box from other trash and someone will come to your table to collect the boxes for recycling. Thank you.

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